

A Path to Peace or Oppression?

The Anti-Normalization Movement in Palestine and Israel

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Chapter One

Introduction

‘Who could be opposed to peace?’ I thought, as I waited for the Reverend Canon to respond. The historic Palestinian chapel, where we sat, deceptively conveyed an environment of tranquility. In reality, outside of the chapel’s stone walls, the city of Jerusalem seethed with tension, indicating a dangerous trajectory of escalating conflict: Roadblocks and temporary checkpoints proliferated; Israeli troops flooded the West Bank; rocket sirens echoed memories of a past intifada as the Israeli military mounted for airstrikes. A war in Gaza was about to begin.

In this setting, amid the overt, palpable manifestations of conflict, how could anyone be opposed to peace? Peace offers freedom from seemingly intractable violence. Peace is hopeful.

“Peace is complicated,” said the Reverend Canon, gently. “It’s tied up in politics; it’s tied up in religion; it’s tied up in economics, in world movements, in international powers.” According to the reverend, peace, a concept that I actively studied, that I sought to cultivate, could be oppressive (Organ, personal interview).

But how? How could a resolution to conflict be so objectionable? In what ways could peace be problematic?

My conversation with the reverend was not one I anticipated. I had visited the church, as part of a research project, to learn more about one of its programs, a series of interfaith initiatives focused on enabling reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians. In days prior, I had met with various nonprofit organizations and individual activists to learn about similar endeavors for peace. Through these interviews, I sought to identify obstacles facing peace organizations and to determine proactive steps to overcome these problems.

I was surprised, therefore, to hear the reverend's nuanced perspective on the topic of peace. Indeed, I was surprised by the idea that peace itself could be the problem. However, as I continued to meet with activists and learn about their peace initiatives, I discovered the prevalence and significance of this theme. Contrary to the reverend's perspective, however, for most organizations, this theme posed a threat.

This threat, I soon learned, was not merely conceptual. It existed in the form of "anti-normalization"—a young social movement, a coalition of Palestinian activists dedicated to illuminating and eliminating the problems of peace. This movement embodies the answer to my initial question: 'who could be opposed to peace?'

For the next several weeks, as I asked peace activists about the obstacles their organizations faced, most replied, not with the expected answers—funding problems, challenging government regulations, regional political instability—but with one word: anti-normalization. As a first-time researcher, excited to tackle any potential obstacle to peace, I was intrigued. I set out to study this movement, initially with the aim of identifying strategies to overcome it.

But, as you will see, such was not the case.

Research Questions & Thesis

In order to understand the controversy of peace, to explore the topic of anti-normalization, I developed a series of research questions and outlined the critical steps necessary to answer each one: What are definitions and interpretations of anti-normalization? What is the impetus behind the movement? Do joint Israeli-Palestinian peace initiatives perpetuate oppression, and, if so, how? How is the anti-normalization movement executed? What are the implications of anti-normalization with respect to peacebuilding?

Each of these questions provides a platform upon which I can contribute new knowledge about the anti-normalization movement and analyze its impact on reshaping the paradigm of peace in Israel and Palestine. In order to answer these research questions, I interviewed Palestinian peace activists, directors of joint peace organizations in both Israel and Palestine, members of institutions affiliated with anti-normalization, and Palestinian academics. These individuals offered different perspectives based on their professional positions, affiliations, and personal identities; therefore, they provided a holistic, comprehensive representation of anti-normalization as a movement.

During the research process, I interviewed these participants through face-to-face meetings in Israel and Palestine, Skype interviews, and telephone calls. Each interview lasted between 30 minutes and one hour. In order to identify these organizations, I first consulted with the Alliance for Middle East Peace, based in Washington, D.C., which supports joint peace initiatives in Israel and Palestine. I then used my initial connections to make new ones: One interviewee would suggest I meet with another. From there, I gained a better grasp of Palestinian and Israeli civil society and could thus research

organizations on my own to identify additional interviewees.

In addition to conducting interviews, I gathered data on the anti-normalization movement through newspaper editorials, online publications, and public documents from institutions affiliated with anti-normalization, particularly the Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, and from joint peace programs. These documents included lists of demands and explanations for the reasons of these demands, specific descriptions of what constitutes normalization and the nuanced forms it takes, and responses to misconceptions about the movement or the movement's demands. In addition, I explored the existing literatures on a history of Palestinian oppression and its impact on collective identity, an examination of Palestinian armed and nonviolent resistance, and an overview of the institutions, strategies, and movements that form the foundation of anti-normalization.

The Context

Established in 2007, the anti-normalization movement materialized in opposition to Israeli and Palestinian institutions that perpetuate the status quo, normalizing the asymmetrical power relations between Israelis and Palestinians. According to the movement, this concept of “normalization” is best understood as “colonization of the mind,” a psychological occupation that justifies the continuation of Palestinian oppression as normal, natural, and unavoidable (PACBI October 2011: 1).

According to the anti-normalization movement, this perpetuation of the status quo occurs within institutions that fail to acknowledge, condemn, and confront the injustices enacted upon Palestinians, from territorial occupation to the status of refugees.

Normalization, however, often exists as a subconscious, not intentional, continuation of

oppression (PACBI October 2011: 1). Therefore, one of the most subliminal forms of normalization—the form I have chosen to study—occurs through peace programs dedicated to bringing Israelis and Palestinians together to support reconciliation and healing. In the context of anti-normalization, some of these peace initiatives fail to recognize and confront the inherent power imbalance between Israelis and Palestinians, and thus they attempt to build peace within an oppressive system. This, according to the concept of anti-normalization, is counterproductive; peace cannot exist between unequal parties (Fanon 1967: 87).

With that said, peace initiatives are not inherently problematic. It is possible to create peace initiatives without normalizing the conflict. But herein lies the problem: What is the appropriate approach to peacebuilding? In what context is peace oppressive, and in what context is peace liberating? Can peace and justice exist independently—and, if not, which should come first?

These questions represent the struggle between the anti-normalization movement and joint Israeli-Palestinian peace initiatives. The anti-normalization movement—much like the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict—is characterized by complexity, nuance, and diverse perspectives. Therefore, through my research, I seek to analyze definitions, interpretations, and experiences of anti-normalization in order to create a comprehensive definition of this movement, to understand the impetus behind the concept, to analyze the movement in practice, and to identify its implications.

As Melford Spiro explained, “key terms in our lexicon [...] continue to evoke wide differences in meaning and to instigate heated controversy among scholars” (Kilborne and Langness 1987: 187). “Peace,” in the context of Israel and Palestine, is

certainly one of those terms. By establishing a comprehensive definition of anti-normalization, I believe that it is possible to more genuinely and deeply understand the intersection of peace and justice in order to more powerfully and effectively support a path to resolving the conflict. What does peace mean and how does the definition impact our approach to achieving it?

Arguments

Based on my conclusions, I argue that anti-normalization—as a concept, as a theory—illuminates and confronts subconscious forms of oppression perpetuated by joint Israeli-Palestinian peace initiatives. Though intended to enable reconciliation and healing, peace initiatives that fail to acknowledge and address the oppression of Palestinians justify the existing asymmetry of power between the two sides; a peace built within an oppressive system is not peace at all. A peace initiative connecting Israelis and Palestinians, regardless of intention, contributes to subconscious, structural oppression if it does not intentionally and deliberately resist it.

In this way, I argue that anti-normalization, as an ideology and a movement, is redefining peace. The movement has compelled and persuaded joint peace initiatives to consider and address potential problems within their programs—problems responsible for the normalization of oppressive institutions. As a result, the anti-normalization movement is shifting the paradigm, *acknowledging* that peace cannot exist in a system of oppression; peace requires justice. With that said, however, I argue that the current disorganization of anti-normalization as a movement presents several problems, including a lack of consistency and effectiveness, the absence of leadership and organization, and, in some cases, the promotion of intimidation and violence.

In the following chapter, I examine the existing discourses with respect to a history of Palestinian oppression and its impact on collective identity, an examination of Palestinian armed and nonviolent resistance, and an overview of the institutions, strategies, and movements that form the foundation of anti-normalization.

In Chapter 3, I analyze the concept of anti-normalization and identify the impetus behind the movement through specific examples of normalizing activities. In Chapter 4, I outline the anti-normalization movement in practice and analyze its implications on joint peace initiatives, as well as within the general discourse of peacebuilding. In Chapter 5, I present my conclusions and offer questions for further research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

In order to define anti-normalization and analyze its implications, it is important to first understand the context within which this movement emerged. In this chapter, I will examine existing literatures on a history of Palestinian oppression and its impact on collective identity, an examination of Palestinian armed and nonviolent resistance, and an overview of the institutions, strategies, and movements that form the foundation of anti-normalization.

Palestinian Identity: Power and Oppression

Anti-normalization addresses various forms of oppression that Palestinians face. In order to understand the movement, it is necessary to examine the history of Palestinian oppression and the consequent evolution of Palestinian national identity. I will analyze a series of texts outlining, first, the shifts in political, economic, and discursive power; second, manifestations of oppression through borders, walls, and exile; and, third, the formation of Palestinian identity in opposition to the Other.

Land: Political, Economic, and Discursive Power

The first tectonic shift to reshape the identity of Palestine occurred, not in the form

of Zionist settlers, but through capitalist globalization (Robinson 2012: 22). During the mid-nineteenth century, Palestine, a territory within the Ottoman Empire,¹ comprised economies of subsistence agriculture and, less significantly, small trade among urban centers—largely facilitated by Bedouin communities. The economic reality of Ottoman Palestine reflected its social and political setting: Palestinians, predominantly Muslim,² organized life within the *hamula*, or clan, system (Pappe 2004: 14). Although Ottoman officials controlled government affairs, Palestinian communities enjoyed relative autonomy. During this time, cooperation among Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities occurred frequently (Campos 2011):

“In each locale, Muslims, Christians, and Jews developed distinct relationships that were shaped by residential patterns, economic situations, and a wide variety of cultural factors [...]. In these mixed towns and cities, religious and ethnic groups often lived in the same neighborhoods [...], belonged to the same craft guilds, worked and shopped in the same markets, went into business together, and frequented the same cafes and law courts. [...] In other words, the physical proximity of different religious groups could, and often did, lead to familiarity and even solidarity” (Campos 2011: 11).

The *musha*’ system, for example, served as a “voluntary method of cultivation based on the rotation of collectively owned plots of land among villagers, so that all would in turn have the benefit of the more fertile parcels” (Pappe 2004: 15). Additionally, legal authority often transcended religious boundaries. Although separate courts existed for each respective religious group, Jewish and Christian Palestinians occasionally appeared before Muslim courts to settle land disputes “if they found their own structures inadequate” (Pappe 2004: 16). According to Michelle Campos, an associate professor of Middle East history, the intersections of diverse religious communities reflected their

¹ The Ottoman province of Palestine was separated into three sub-provinces, called *sanjak*, namely Nablus, Acre, and Jerusalem (Pappe 2004: 14).

² The population of Palestine at this time was about 400,000. Approximately 60,000 were Christian and 20,000 were Jewish; the remaining Palestinians were Muslim (Pappe 2004: 14).

association with a collective Ottoman identity:

“The revolutionary slogans of ‘equality and brotherhood’ were premised on an ideology of belonging to a unified Ottoman people-nation. In Palestine as elsewhere throughout the empire, Muslims, Christians, and Jews adopted the viewpoint that the Ottoman nation was comprised of all the ethnic, religious, and linguistic elements of the empire bound together in civic, territorial, and contractual terms” (Campos 2011: 5).

Following the Crimean War, however, the Ottoman Empire liberalized the Palestinian economy, allowing foreign investment throughout the territory (Pappe 2004: 21-22). This political decision enabled foreigners to purchase Palestinian land and property, giving birth to profitable financial and real estate industries. Initially, Muslim nobility in Palestine refused to participate in these new industries because they propagated a lifestyle in which “money and finance came uppermost”³ (Pappe 2004: 21-22). Most problematic, the vast majority of Palestinians, who relied on pastoral agriculture, could not afford to purchase—what political economist Karl Polanyi would term “falsely commodified”—land, their means of survival (Loy 1997). These *fellaheen*, or peasants, thus leased plots of land from few wealthy owners (Pappe 2004: 25). Ilan Pappe, an Israeli historian, succinctly expressed the economic transformation of the Holy Land:

“Palestine’s integration into Europe’s capitalist monetary system created new patterns of social mobilization, introducing newcomers into the local elite. [...] The new ruling elite, consisting primarily of large land owners and agricultural producers, discovered that the most attractive way to increase their capital was through land speculation. The Zionist movement, arriving in Palestine at this precise moment, quickly assessed the situation and began exploiting it” (Pappe 2004: 31).

In this setting, Palestinians, particularly *fellaheen*, began to lose agency over the land on which they had built their lives. Instead of communal-owners, they became tenants—subject to eviction, which often pushed peasants toward emerging opportunities

³ In addition, *shari’a*, Islamic religious law, prohibited Muslims from earning profit on interest, according to an orthodox interpretation; therefore, Muslim Palestinians could not justify participating in the banking industry (Pappe 2004: 21-22).

as laborers in urban centers. Some scholars argue that the introduction of global capitalism empowered development in the region, leading to technological, social, and economic advancement (Sen 2012: 16); however, this argument fails to acknowledge the detriment of liberalizing the economy: the wealthy landowners benefitted, while the majority of indigenous persons became commodities within the new system—inexpensive, expendable labor (Fanon 1967: 99). Not only did the economic reality shift, it erased the “psychological mechanisms” of Palestinians, meaning the basic structure of life—its organization, its purpose—dissolved in the face of a new system (Fanon 1967: 97). Pappe, once again, aptly outlines the significance of the change:

“The peasants were not just moving away from known modes of production or losing their traditional means of production; they were abandoning a way of life, a set of beliefs that had helped them make a sense of their lives, but without a blueprint for the future. [...] The gap left by the end of an old social system still exists in today’s Israel and Palestine” (Pappe 2004: 25).

As this new system reshaped Palestine, Zionism emerged as a nationalist Jewish movement in Europe. In response to rampant, violent anti-Semitism, Zionism formed as an intellectual movement among Eastern European Jews,⁴ ultimately incorporating a colonialist ideology (Pappe 2004: 36). Under the leadership of Theodor Herzl and Chaim Weizmann, the Zionist movement launched its colonial project, identifying *eretz israel*, which was then Ottoman Palestine, as the ultimate homeland for the Jewish people (Pappe 2006: 38). Thus, Zionists began mass immigration to the Holy Land.⁵ Although

⁴ In the 1850s in eastern Europe, Jewish scholars drifted from traditional religious dogma and embraced “reason and science” to resolve problems with “Jewish existence” in Europe. These scholars reinvented Judaism as “the ideology of a nation rather than a religion” (Pappe 2004: 36).

⁵ Zionist immigration to Palestine was referred to as *aliyah*, the Hebrew term for “ascent,” since it was seen in Jewish tradition as a transition to a “higher form of living and existence” (Pappe 2006: 38). This occurred in major waves from 1882-1903 and 1904-1914 (Harms 2005: 61-62), as well as additional waves after World War I.

this movement developed, in part, as a response to anti-Semitism, one cannot deny that Zionism was a colonial project:

“Like colonialism elsewhere, it was a European movement, with people entering Palestine for the sake of European interests, not local ones. The locals were seen as a commodity or an asset to be exploited for the benefit of the newcomers or an obstacle to be removed” (Pappe 2004: 42).

Within this new environment, Zionists and Palestinians clashed—both sides vying for land, both sides seeking to preserve their identities (Pappe 2004; Harms 2012). With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the British acquired control of Palestine, creating the British Mandate (Pappe 2004; Harms 2012). During this period, the Balfour Declaration, issued by the British Foreign Secretary, promised the Zionist movement a Jewish nation in the Holy Land (Pappe 2004), a promise that failed to honor a previous agreement to bestow control of Greater Syria, including Palestine, upon the Sharif Husayn ibn Ali for the establishment of an Arab state⁶ (Gettleman and Schaar 2003: 113-116). Palestinians, on the other hand, had virtually no control over the future of their homeland; a colonial Western power wrested from the indigenous population all agency over Palestine.

With the end of the British Mandate, however, the United Nations assumed authority over the future of Palestine (Yusuf 2002). In 1947, through General Assembly Resolution 181, the United Nations proposed to divide the land into two separate Jewish and Arab states—excluding Jerusalem, which would be governed as an international district (Yusuf 2002: 39). While Zionist officials celebrated, Palestinian leaders rejected the partition plan: First, the resolution allocated 56 percent of Palestine to the Jewish

⁶ In the Husayn-McMahon correspondence, Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner in Egypt, implied to Sharif Husayn ibn Ali, governor of the Hijaz (Arab region comprising the Islamic holy cities Mecca and Medina), that the British government would support Hashemite sovereignty over Greater Syria, which included Palestine, given that ibn Ali provided support to the British in defeating the Ottoman Empire during World War I (Gettleman and Schaar 2003: 113-116).

state, yet Zionist settlers only occupied ten percent of the designated territory and comprised 1.5 percent of the population (Yusuf 2002: 39). Second, Palestinians were concerned about Muslim and Christian holy sites that they would no longer oversee (Yusuf 2002: 39). Third, and most significant, the partition plan, simply by its nature, legitimated the Zionist colonial project to establish a Jewish state (Salem 2002). The plan, therefore, unequivocally enhanced the power of the Zionist cause and suppressed that of the Palestinian people.

Before exploring the history of Palestine after 1947, which I plan to explain in the next section, I would like to address another significant element leading to a system of Palestinian oppression: discursive power. According to philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault, relations of power depend upon the “production, accumulation, circulation, and functioning of a discourse” (Foucault 1980: 93). A strategy among Zionists to effectively exercise, consolidate, and justify their power in opposition to Palestinians occurred through invoking historical, religious, cultural connections to the land, primarily through assigning particularly significant names to geographical places (Khalidi 1997: 139). Thus, since the British Mandate era, Zionists maintained discursive hegemony, much to the dismay of indigenous Palestinians, and thus consolidated an important element of political power.

This strategy exploits biblical history to justify Zionist claims to land, using language—simply, a name—to establish a norm that supports an Israeli narrative. Hebron, for example, is the name of a town in the southern West Bank. This biblical name, applied by the Israeli government, reflects an ancient Jewish past (Khalidi 1997: 139). The Palestinian name for the same township, al Khalil, is generally unrecognizable

to those who do not speak Arabic (Pappe 2004). In an international context, Hebron, is the most widely used name for this contentious site, reflecting the global significance of Israeli discursive hegemony. By invoking a biblical Jewish connection to the land, Israel tacitly justifies its presence and occupation of Hebron.

On a larger, more visible scale, the contention surrounding the name of the state, Israel versus Palestine, represents the immense impact language has in constructing and solidifying power (Khalidi 1997: 137):

“Although such measures may seem petty, they are related to the significant process of attempting to signal control by imposing place names. This has, for example rendered the West Bank as Judea and Samaria in the official terminology used for Israel’s Hebrew, English, and Arabic pronouncements and publications” (Khalidi 1997: 139).

The conflict of Israel and Palestine is predicated upon conflicting narratives (Khalidi 1997: 148). Language privileges and subliminally legitimates a particular narrative. This concept has been applied in the case of archaeology; certain strata of a city, assigned biblical or historic names, are privileged because they reflect the heritage of those in power (Khalidi 1997: 140):

“[...] then a certain contemporary ‘reality’ claiming roots in the past can be imposed on the present, and further consecrated” (Khalidi 1997: 140).

Thus, Israel manages to maintain discursive hegemony, as its historical and geographical terms remain widely recognized and adopted; however, it also maintains such power through political phraseology (Khalidi 2013: x-xi). In the media, in education, in civil society, the Israeli government employs terms that justify its actions and delegitimize those of Palestinians. Terms, such as “security” and “terrorism,” are used to justify collective punishment of Palestinians, Israeli airstrikes in Gaza, continued requests for military aid from the United States (Khalidi 2013: x):

“Where Palestinians are concerned, time and again during their modern history, corrupted phraseology has profoundly obscured reality” (Khalidi 2013: x).

These historical paradigmatic shifts in Palestine’s economic, political, and discursive reality constructed the foundation upon which asymmetrical power relations between Israelis and Palestinians developed—the power imbalance that the anti-normalization movement seeks to dismantle. Israel insures its sovereignty through a discourse (Foucault 1980: 93), preventing Palestinians from acquiring full control of state functions, such as education, currency, media, museums. Without such power, Palestinians lack essential capital “for disseminating and imposing uniform ‘national’ criteria of identity” (Khalidi 1997: 127-128). Thus, the Palestinian does not define—but is defined:

“My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning...” (Fanon 1967: 113).

Movement: Borders, Walls, Refugees

Following the proposal of United Nations Resolution 181, the volatile political situation crumbled. In May 1948, Zionists declared independence for the state of Israel, leading to an international war, known among Palestinians as *al-nakba*, meaning “catastrophe” in Arabic (Khalidi 1997: 576-577). During the war, the Israeli military battled units from Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, and ultimately acquired control of 78 percent of the land (Harms 2012: 98). Palestinian dispossession culminated in a loss of historic villages and cities along the coast, throughout the South, in Galilee, and between Jaffa and Jerusalem⁷ (Khalidi 1997: 582). Through this loss of homeland,

⁷ “Given the centrality of attachment to place characteristic not only of Palestinians, but also of others in traditional and semitransitional societies, it can be imagined how powerful an impact these events must have had” (Khalidi 1997: 582).

al-nakba simultaneously erased and reformed a sense of Palestinian identity, swallowing a heritage and displacing a people:

“The experience of defeat, dispossession, and exile guaranteed that they knew what their identity was very soon afterwards: they were Palestinians. The refugee experience, the callous treatment by Israel and several of the Arab host states, and the shared trauma of 1948, which all still had to come to terms with, cemented and universalized a common identity as Palestinians” (Khalidi 1997: 619-623).

Among Palestinians, there is no episode of *al-nakba* more tragic than that of Dayr Yasin. The Palestinian village has become a symbol of collective loss and violent repression. During the war, the Palestinian village of Dayr Yasin was located along the Israeli military path toward Jerusalem. Following a battle with Palestinian forces outside of the village, the Israeli military invaded Dayr Yasin (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003: 161):

“In brutal acts of revenge for their losses, the Jewish fighters killed many of the remaining men, women, and children and raped and mutilated others. Those not killed immediately were ignominiously paraded through Jerusalem and then sent to the city’s Arab sector” (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003: 161).

In totality, the period of war and dispossession led to mass displacement of the Palestinian population, beginning a refugee crisis that remains a significant humanitarian tragedy in the Middle East. Regarding the number of Palestinians who became refugees during *al-nakba*, estimations vary—from 520,000 to one million (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003: 156). This illuminates another significant component of Palestinian identity: the refugee. Years after *al-nakba*, The Palestinian refugee population increased, during the Six-Day War of 1967.⁸ During the brief war, Israel conquered the Golan

⁸ I omitted a significant portion of Palestinian history moving from the war of 1948 to 1967. The period in between is considered the “lost years,” prior to the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964, “during which time the Palestinians seemed to have disappeared from the political map as an independent actor, and indeed as a people” due to their dispersion across five separate countries (Khalidi 2003: 576-577).

Heights from Syria, the Sinai and Gaza Strip from Egypt, and the West Bank from Jordan (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003: 240). Alongside the loss of land, approximately 250,000 Palestinians became refugees (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003: 241).

One of the most contentious responses to Palestinian displacement is the question of return. International law mandates the right of refugees—and any persons—to return to their country, according to Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states, “(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country” (United Nations 2016). Some scholars identify this unfulfilled mandate as a continuation of Palestinian oppression:

“The Palestinian insistence [of return] is no unique, decontextualized aberration; it is fully supported by every international legal and moral covenant known to the modern world” (Said 1992: 47).

Closely related to the right of return, freedom of movement represents a widely recognized human right which Palestinians cannot exercise. The Israeli government imposes severe restrictions on travel within and from Israel and the Palestinian territories (Said 1992: 47). In order for Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza to enter Israel proper, they must acquire special permits, which are not always administered (Pappe 2004). Furthermore, those who do receive permits must travel through various military checkpoints, a humiliating, time-consuming ordeal:

“The quintessential Palestinian experience, which illustrates some of the most basic issues raised by Palestinian identity, takes place at a border, an airport, a checkpoint: in short, at any one of those many modern barriers where identities are checked and verified” (Khalidi 1997: 104).

Even within the West Bank, Palestinian movement is restricted. The region is separated into Areas A, B, and C, each referring to varying levels of Israeli military and

administrative control⁹ (Khalidi 1997: 105). Additionally, travel outside of Israel and Palestine—for Palestinians—is challenging because some countries do not accept Palestinian travel documents, neither passports provided by the Palestinian Authority nor refugee travel documents administered by Egypt, Israel, and Lebanon (Khalidi 1997: 107-110):

“Borders are a problem for Palestinians since their identity—which is constantly reinforced in myriad positive and negative ways—not only is subject to question by the powers that be; but also is in many contexts suspect almost by definition. As a result, at each of these barriers which most others take for granted, every Palestinian is exposed to the possibility of harassment, exclusion, and sometimes worse, simply because of his or her identity” (Khalidi 1997: 105).

To further restrict Palestinian movement, the Israeli government constructed a separation barrier, surrounding Gaza entirely and largely disconnecting the West Bank from Israel proper (Zonszein 2014). Conceived in the 1990s, constructed since 2002, the separation barrier—also referred to as “apartheid wall” or “security fence”—is composed of an 8-meter-high concrete wall in certain areas and an electrified barbed-wire fence in others (Zonszein 2014):

“The wall, the concrete, the razor wire everywhere conveyed the impression that we were in prison. One misstep and one can be arrested and hauled off to prison; one can be transferred from an open-air prison to a closed prison” (Davis 2016: 59).

Some Palestinian villages are almost entirely surrounded by the barrier, “which keeps its residents from regular access to the businesses, hospitals, cultural centers and other services” (Zonszein 2014). Further fragmenting Palestinian territory, Israeli settlements in the West Bank continue to threaten the possibility of Palestinian self-determination. The settlements, considered illegal according to international law, divert

⁹ Area A composes 18 percent of the West Bank; it is under full civil and security control of the Palestinian Authority. Area B composes 22 percent of the West Bank; it is under Palestinian civil and Israeli security authority. Area C composes 60 percent of the West Bank; it is under Israeli civil and security control (Zahriyeh 2014).

significant amounts of Palestinian resources, most notably water (Asser 2010). In addition, settlements prevent Palestinians from accessing their land, and violence between settlers and Palestinians threaten local communities (B'Tselem 2012). These restrictions comprise fundamental components of continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank. Edward Said, the iconic Palestinian historian who established post-colonial studies, aptly summarized the challenges of Palestinian existence:

“The existential Palestinian predicament has been the felt need for political survival combined with the tangible consequences of territorial as well as political alienation.” (Said 1992: 150).

This political and social climate—of physical displacement, restricted movement, and limited civil liberties—characterizes the status quo; the oppression of Palestinians is embedded within these institutions, policies, and histories. These are the structures of inequality which the anti-normalization movement seeks to dismantle.

The Other: Identity in Opposition

In addition to shared experiences of trauma, Palestinian identity is, in part, constructed in opposition to the Israeli other. As Rashid Khalidi, a Palestinian American historian of the modern Middle East, explains, there are cultural and historical realities of Palestinian existence that make its identity independent and unique; however, to fully understand Palestinian identity, one must explore the “context of a sequence of other histories, a sequence of other narratives” (Khalidi 1997: 125). The formation of the Palestinian as not-Israeli—as enemy, as neighbor, as “us” not “them”—plays a significant role in establishing a clear identity. According to Said, for every culture, for every people, must exist a “competing alter ego,” a contrasting identity (Khalidi 1997; Said 1979). For Palestinians, this contrasting identity is that of the Israeli:

“Without reciprocal recognition, there can be no identity, no self-worth, no dignity. One is human to the extent he surpasses the immediate, projects himself into the future, and above all, reaches out for

the other in order to confirm and be confirmed” (Bulhan 1985: 114).

While deeply and conversely related, however, the culture and identity of Palestinians is simultaneously threatened by the other, whose colonial past has systematically chipped away at Palestinian existence. The history of struggle, displacement, and oppression, while contributing to collective identity, erases the Palestinian from world consciousness: the colonized assume the political, economic, and social identity of the colonizer (Fanon 1967: 100). To Frantz Fanon, a psychiatrist and scholar of post-colonial studies, this consequence of colonialism essentially equates with extinction:

“If, for instance, Martians undertook to colonize the earth men—not to initiate them into Martian culture but to *colonize* them—we should be doubtful of the persistence of any earth personality” (Fanon 1967: 95).

The complexity of Palestinian identity and a collective experience of oppression are inextricable. Oppression and the struggle for power both create and destroy the Palestinian. But it is this struggle *against* oppression that ensures the survival of Palestinian identity. That, as we will later explore, is the struggle of the anti-normalization movement.

Palestinian Resistance: A Case for Nonviolence

Defined by nonviolence, the anti-normalization movement contributes to a vibrant history of Palestinian resistance. In order to fully understand the context of anti-normalization, it is important to explore the history of Palestinian struggle and examine the emergence, influence, and efficacy of violent and nonviolent action. I will examine various texts focused, first, on historical episodes of armed resistance and, second, on themes of nonviolence in a Palestinian context.

Armed Resistance

Historically, Palestinian militias and organizations of armed resistance have failed to achieve their aim—to realize independence, dismantle the existing structures of power, and ensure self-determination (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003). Multiple variables contribute to this lack of success: political disorganization, social divisions, a lack sufficient military resources among Palestinians compared to their Israeli counterparts (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003). These episodes of violent uprising, intersecting with significant nonviolent resistance movements (which I will explain in the next section), played a major role in shaping global perceptions of the Palestinian national movement (Davis 2016: 53). However, the image of violent Palestinian uprisings has been exploited and exaggerated by political institutions and media outlets, particularly in Israel and the United States, in order to demonize the general Palestinian population and justify major military actions against Palestinians (Davis 2016: 53).

For example, in 2014 the military wing of Hamas, Al-Qassam Brigades, in Gaza began launching rockets indiscriminately into Israel, threatening the civilian population (Erlanger and Kershner 2014). According to international law, these attacks were unjustifiable, ultimately killing six civilians and a foreign worker (BBC 2014). In response, the Israeli government replied with severe military actions, sanctioning collective punishment against the general Palestinian population. The Israeli Defense Forces implemented mass administrative detentions and increased its military presence in the West Bank (Erlanger and Kershner 2014). Most significant, Israel conducted airstrikes in Gaza, killing more than 2,100 Palestinians, an overwhelming majority of whom were civilians (BBC 2014). To justify this response, however, the Israeli

government and various media outlets suggested that Israel was merely responding in self-defense, suggesting that both sides were acting on an equal footing, and the general Palestinian population shared responsibility for the rocket attacks. In cases such as this, the Palestinian people are depicted as uncompromising, ruthless, and irrational, swept into the global category of “Islamic terrorist,” while overwhelming Israeli military action—costing thousands of innocent lives—is deemed a rational response to a security concern (Davis 2016: 53).

Although armed resistance has not been successful with respect to its intended purpose, this element of Palestinian history has influenced the evolution of Palestinian national identity and narrative. During the British Mandate period, Palestinian and Zionist communities experienced periodic violent clashes. In 1936, these incidents escalated into a mass uprising, generally referred to as the Great Arab Revolt (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003). During this period, thousands of Palestinians joined the resistance effort, and the British authorities responded by deploying tens of thousands of troops, as the Zionist movement sought to militarize its own population (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003: 103). The revolution collapsed, however, as alliances between Arab and British leaders withered and internal social divisions within Palestinian society intensified (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003: 103). Nevertheless, the Great Arab Revolt is considered an important episode in the history of Palestinian national resistance:

“As the first sustained violent uprising of the Palestinian national movement, and the first major episode of this sort since 1834, perhaps no event has been more momentous in Palestinian history than the Great Arab Revolt” (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003: 102).

Since the Great Arab Revolt, violent resistance has materialized in various forms. Following its inception in 1964, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), led by

Yasser Arafat, became a primary mechanism of organizing resistance¹⁰ (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003: 241, 243). In this context, the *fedayeen*, an historic image of Palestinian resistance, became a powerful symbol of identity and nationalism. The *fedayeen*, meaning “those who sacrifice themselves” in Arabic, carried out various campaigns against the Israeli military (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003: 243). Though tactically defeated, these fighters—and the *kafiya* each wore—became popular images of Palestinian resolve (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003: 243), representing:

“[...] the way in which Palestinian failure has been portrayed as triumph, or at least as heroic perseverance against impossible odds. Such a portrayal draws on the Palestinians’ perception that throughout their modern history, they have faced a constellation of enemies so formidable as to be nearly insuperable.” (Khalidi 1997: 625)

Indeed, violent resistance in Palestinian history has proven unsuccessful in its purpose to further the cause of Palestinian self-determination. Despite its inefficacy, however, the image of the *feday*, the interspersed episodes of armed resistance in Palestinian history contribute to the mosaic that is Palestinian identity—not as a celebration or justification of violence, but a recognition of collective strength, even in the face of failure.

Whether successful or unsuccessful, the active and persistent pursuit of self-determination, equality, and recognition among Palestinians is, itself, vital to the cultivation and preservation of a collective identity. Without such active resistance, the identity of the Palestinian would extend no further than an identity of marginalization:

“In terms of the distinction between consciousness and self-consciousness we can say that the colonial subject’s reflective powers are marginal in the sense that the colonial subject finds itself frequently unable to make alterations to the relation it has to the world” (Bird-Pollan 2015: 127).

The Palestinians, however, embraced their failures to alter the reality of oppression,

¹⁰ [...] though it failed to fully mobilize Palestinians “under the single ideological umbrella of Palestinism” (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003: 243).

avoiding passivity and adorning resistance. Thus, the Palestinian cause confronts and seeks to dismantle a system which threatens to erase its identity. Furthermore, this tendency to abort passivity as a colonized population has led to a significant and vibrant history of nonviolent resistance, compared to episodes of armed resistance.

Nonviolent Resistance

According to Maxine Kaufman-Lacusta, a Canadian author and activist, “civil-based resistance has been and still is one of the major components of the Palestinians’ struggle for return and independence” (Kaufman-Lacusta 2011). Historically, nonviolent protests have remained an integral component of the Palestinian national cause. As early as 1936, prior to the Great Arab Revolt, Palestinians led an eight-month demonstration in protest of Zionist and British hostilities (Harms 2012). As previously mentioned, Palestinian resistance has not yielded independence from Israeli occupation or the establishment of a Palestinian state, yet these campaigns contributed to a collective consciousness:

“On the Palestinian popular level the defeats, the dislocations, the dispossession, the flight, and the expulsions ironically helped complete the process whose genesis we have traced [...]: these failures ultimately resulted in the universalization of a uniform Palestinian identity.” (Khalidi 1997: 619).

Compared to violent episodes, however, *nonviolent* resistance efforts have proven more beneficial to the persistence of the Palestinian national cause. Nonviolent resistance enables Palestinians to essentially deprive Israelis of their political power by “withdrawing the cooperation of the ruled” (Hallward 2011). This success—relative to the inefficacy of violent uprising—reflects arguments outlined in general research on nonviolent resistance.

Erica Chenoweth, a political scientist at the Josef Korbel School of International

Studies, examined the relative success of nonviolent versus violent resistance movements through quantitative analysis, utilizing the Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes (NAVCO) data set, comprising more than 300 violent and nonviolent movements between 1900 and 2006 (Chenoweth 2011). Through her study, she observed that “nonviolent resistance campaigns were nearly twice as likely to achieve full or partial success as their violent counterparts” (Chenoweth 2011).

Furthermore, nonviolent resistance initiatives focused on issues of territory, including anti-occupation campaigns such as Palestinian civil resistance initiatives, additionally had a “slight advantage” in achieving success (Chenoweth 2011). The primary reason for this outcome is the advantage of mass participation in nonviolent resistance campaigns compared to their violent counterparts because the “moral, physical, informational, and commitment barriers” of participation are lower (Chenoweth 2011; Pearlman 2011). Mass participation generates three primary factors that facilitate successful movements. First, engaging a larger population enables greater resilience in the face of retaliation against the campaign. Second, mass participation yields civic disruption, which renders the status quo costlier to the oppressor. Third, loyalty shifts occur among the oppressor’s constituency, which begins to recognize—and often actively resist—the plight of the oppressed (Chenoweth 2011). Overall, Chenoweth argues that mass participation significantly determines the outcome of a campaign:

“Nonviolent campaigns facilitate the active participation of many more people than violent campaigns, thereby broadening the base of resistance and raising the costs to opponents of maintaining the status quo” (Chenoweth 2011).

Conversely, nonviolent campaigns that proved to be unsuccessful were those which lacked mass participation—which failed to mobilize “a robust, diverse, broad-based membership” able to challenge the oppressor’s power and overcome substantial

retaliation (Chenoweth 2011; Pearlman 2011).

One of the most relevant examples of Palestinian nonviolent resistance is the First Intifada. During this time, civil leaders mobilized each sector of Palestinian society, engaging massive popular resistance, contrary to past campaigns which only involved “elitist guerrilla groups” (Kaufman-Lacusta 2011). Kaufman-Lacusta writes that the uprising comprised “protests, massive marches, picketing, civil disobedience, tax revolts, and defiance of all occupation orders” (Kaufman-Lacusta 2011). These important moments in Palestinian history molded and reinforced a national narrative and collective identity as a people:

“This same narrative stressed the heroic quality of the revolt, its successes in for a time bringing together the Palestinian people” (Khalidi 1997: 628).

The civil infrastructure for cohesive Palestinian nonviolent resistance actually began much earlier—in the 1960s—with the goal of maintaining relative autonomy in the face of Israeli occupation (Kaufman-Lacusta 2011). During this time, “hundreds of nongovernmental organizations in the fields of human rights, health, environment, education, and the preservation of cultural heritage were established,” providing a foundation of mass participation in a distinctly Palestinian setting for future movements to resist occupation and pursue self-determination (Kaufman-Lacusta 2011).

Jonathan Kuttab, a human rights lawyer and founder of the Palestine Center for the Study of Nonviolence, contends that nonviolent resistance is “the greatest threat to the continued occupation” (Kaufman-Lacusta 2011). If Palestinians refuse to act with violence, he claims, “there would be a very good chance of exposing [...] the evil of the occupation—to the point where it will be no longer sustainable” (Kaufman-Lacusta 2011). The anti-normalization movement acknowledges the efficacy of non-violent

resistance and embraces this approach to delegitimize Israeli occupation and expose the oppression of Palestinians.

Foundations of the Anti-Normalization Movement

The resistance approach of anti-normalization incorporates themes from other historical strategies and movements. Before further examining anti-normalization, it is necessary to identify these influences and analyze their implications. I will outline the Khartoum Agreement, the case of resistance to apartheid in South Africa, and the development of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement.

Khartoum Agreement

Following the Six-Day War between Israel and its Arab neighbors, eight member states of the Arab League—Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Kuwait, and Sudan—signed the Khartoum Agreement of 1967, a joint resolution stating the parameters of acceptable interactions with the state of Israel (Pierpaoli 2008). The overall goal of the meeting was to create a “unified front against Israel” (Pierpaoli 2008). As a result, the resolution became the foundation for future Arab positions with respect to Israel (Pierpaoli 2008), even informing the establishment of the anti-normalization campaign.

Among the terms of the resolution, the participating states pledged to continue declaring warfare against Israel and providing economic aid for Egypt and Jordan (Pierpaoli 2008). However, the most influential component of the resolution came to be known as the “three nos”—“no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with the Israelis” (Pierpaoli 2008). Thus, the “three nos” came to be a cornerstone of the anti-normalization movement’s approach to engagement with Israelis.

Although the anti-normalization movement does not fully incorporate these themes (such as “no recognition of Israel”), the movement embraces the general idea of global cooperation to resist establishing a political and social norm of Israeli occupation and Palestinian oppression—particularly, in the context of my research, through ensuring “no peace” until justice is realized.

The Case of South Africa

Furthermore, the anti-normalization campaign was largely inspired by the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa (PACBI June 2007: 1). In 1959, the movement for the global boycott began when Tanzanian political leader Julius Nyerere urged the British government to cease purchasing products from South Africa. This element of resistance became one of the African National Congress’ (ANC) “Four Pillars of Struggle” (Kasrils 2013: 18). In the 1980s, the international solidarity movement expanded, as the boycott campaign extended to five continents, “uniting members of diverse political parties, trade unions, and ordinary people from all walks of life” (Kasrils 2013: 21). Inspired by this powerful movement, the United Nations issued Security Council Resolution 181¹¹, requesting member states to “cease the sale and shipment of arms, ammunition, and military vehicles to South Africa and the countries supporting and trading with it” (Kasrils 2013: 21). In 1963, the United Nations called upon member states to stop all exchanges with South Africa—including cultural, academic, and athletic engagement (Kasrils 2013: 21).

“We learned in South Africa that the only way to end apartheid peacefully was to force the powerful to the table through economic pressure” (statement by Desmond Tutu; Abunimah 2014).

¹¹ This resolution should not be confused with the UN General Assembly Resolution 181, which recommended the partition of Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states in 1947 (Yusuf 2002: 39).

Prior to the comprehensive global boycott, the ANC administered an internal campaign. In fact, the primary targets of boycott were athletic events, which “cut straight to the heart of white South Africans,” according to Ronnie Kasrils, a South African politician and anti-apartheid activist (Kasrils 2013: 23). Ultimately, this important campaign led to a referendum—which was “whites only”—in 1992 to determine whether to negotiate with the leaders of the boycott (Kasrils 2013: 24). Alongside business owners, who began to feel financial pressure as a result of the boycott, these South African sports fans voted in favor (Kasrils 2013: 24). This internal approach relates directly to the emerging anti-normalization campaign, which focuses on resisting oppression generated by normalizing-institutions in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza—though the movement does incorporate a global aspect:

“Their [Palestinians’] struggles have many similarities with those against South African apartheid, one of the most salient being the ideological condemnation of their freedom efforts” (Davis 2016: 53).

There are many similarities between oppressive institutions in South Africa and those in Israel and Palestine. In fact, these South African leaders “were among the first to expose the underlying common denominators between” the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory and apartheid in South Africa, both as systems of racial discrimination (PACBI June 2007: 1):

“I know firsthand that Israel has created an apartheid reality within its borders and through its occupation. The parallels to my own beloved South Africa are painfully stark indeed” (statement by Desmond Tutu; Abunimah 2014).

Along the lines of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, the Palestinian Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions campaign developed using a similar model (Davis 2016: 54):

A Call for Global Boycott

On July 9, 2005, Palestinian civil society announced the establishment of a new campaign to compel the Israeli government to uphold international law by ending the occupation of Palestinian territories and ensuring civil liberties to Palestinians. Through this campaign, known as the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign, Palestinians called “upon international civil society organizations and people of conscience all over the world to ‘impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era’” (Barghouti 2011: 5).

The primary aim of the BDS campaign focuses on addressing three manifestations of injustice against the Palestinian people. By invoking international laws and the Universal Principles of Human Rights, the BDS campaign called upon Israel to, first, end the occupation of Palestinian territories acquired during the Six-Day War in 1967, in addition to tearing down the separation barrier; second, acknowledge the civil rights of Palestinian citizens of Israel; and third, support the right of return among Palestinian refugees—who otherwise could not travel back to the Holy Land (Barghouti 2011: 6):

“In this context, the BDS movement has played a major role in intensifying the now public fear in Israel that Israel is becoming a world pariah, as apartheid South Africa was, with all the expected consequences” (Barghouti 2011: 15).

It is important to mention that, though inspired by anti-apartheid movements in South Africa, the “legalized and institutionalized racial discrimination” exercised by Israel against Palestinians is not equivalent to the case of South Africa (Barghouti 2011: 17). According to the BDS movement, “no two oppressive regimes are identical” (Barghouti 2011: 17).

BDS and anti-normalization are fundamentally connected. The two movements

share a similar principle, focused on disengagement from Israeli institutions that normalize the occupation (Kasrils 2013; Barghouti 2011). However, the anti-normalization movement primarily addresses internal problems of subconsciously or overtly supporting the norm of Israeli oppressive policies. BDS, on the other hand, engages an international audience, specifically in the economic arena. Although anti-normalization has a global presence, influencing and impacting international peace organizations that work in Israel and Palestine, the movement predominantly focuses internally—engaging Palestinian and Israeli civil society.

Chapter Three

Peace or Oppression?

We have outlined the roots of Palestinian oppression. We have explored an abbreviated history of Palestinian resistance efforts, both violent and nonviolent. We have identified the strategic and ideological foundation upon which the anti-normalization movement emerged. At this point, let us turn our attention to the movement itself; let us examine where this movement is situated within the context of Palestinian resistance to oppressive systems.

Anti-normalization, as a concept and a movement, is complex. Because it developed recently, because it lacks central authority, because it is controversial in nature, this topic proved challenging to study. How could I reconcile experiences of anti-normalization with contradictory elements of its ideology?

I determined that it is easiest to consider, first, this movement in its simplest terms. Forgive my simple analogy, but I believe it is the most appropriate platform to provide context before analyzing this complicated movement:

Anti-normalization is like a lemon tree. Over the past decade, this movement has developed a sturdy trunk—its ideological backbone. The trunk represents clear, concise demands; it conveys the theoretical framework through which this movement is

actualized. The branches, however, are less sturdy. They sway in the wind; they break sometimes. Each unique branch represents the movement in practice. Connected to a strong ideological support, the branches of activism take on various forms, differing in size and function. They do not always align with the trunk and sometimes bend in contradictory motion. But they also produce the lemon. They create the bitter fruit, or generate for society the uncomfortable realization of Palestinian oppression and thus the inspiration for change.

We, however, shall not begin with an analysis of the trunk, nor the branches, nor the fruit. Instead, let us begin with the seeds, the impetus behind the anti-normalization movement—the unseen societal problems from which the movement sprouted.

In Chapter 3, I will outline and analyze the term “normalization,” the concept which the anti-normalization movement—clearly—opposes. I will begin with an overview of two specific forms of normalization and then examine how the definition of the concept changes based on different contexts. For each component of normalization, I will provide a practical example to explain the manifestation and consequences of this concept.

Normalization exists in various forms, but I have chosen to analyze the problem with respect to peacebuilding initiatives, specifically those which bring Israelis and Palestinians together for joint programs. Thus, each practical example of normalization in this chapter profiles a joint peace organization or initiative.

Through my research, I argue that anti-normalization, as a concept and a movement, identifies and confronts joint peace initiatives that—intentionally or

subconsciously—perpetuate the status quo, thus contributing to the oppression of the Palestinian people. Although many joint peace initiatives intend to promote healing and reconciliation, if they do not directly and actively acknowledge the injustices of occupation, then they passively propagate the asymmetrical power relations between Israelis and Palestinians. A peace initiative bringing together the two sides, regardless of intention, contributes to structural oppression if it does not intentionally and deliberately resist it.

The identity of the Palestinian, as previously outlined, is constructed upon a history of resistance, of perseverance in the face of oppression. As a concept, anti-normalization embodies this cornerstone of Palestinian existence, but it also extends the theme beyond its explicit context. Past Palestinian struggles and movements opposed various forms of colonization, such as early Zionist immigration to Palestine, construction of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, erection of the separation barrier, militarization of the Palestinian territories. But anti-normalization confronts a unique, often unrecognized form of oppression—that is, “colonization of the mind,” otherwise known as “normalization” (PACBI October 2011: 1). In this context, normalization refers to the process of subconsciously accepting the status quo, the current asymmetrical power dynamic between Israelis and Palestinians, as the norm (PACBI October 2011: 1). In this way, normalization imbeds the injustices of occupation and the oppression of Palestinians, not in the physical structure of a wall or the physical experience of exile, but in the general consciousness of a people:

“It is helpful to think of normalization as a ‘colonization of the mind,’ whereby the oppressed subject comes to believe that the oppressor’s reality is the only ‘normal’ reality that must be subscribed to, and that the oppression is a fact of life that must be coped with” (PACBI October 2011: 1).

Normalization occurs within institutions that do not acknowledge, condemn, or resist the occupation and oppression of Palestinians, suggesting that they are equally responsible for the conflict, for political and social development, for a future peace (PACBI October 2011: 1).

To accept normalization is not necessarily a conscious intention to oppress. In many cases, those who accept normalization—either Palestinian or Israeli—may engage with the other, subconsciously or deliberately, and unintentionally ignore the oppression of Palestinians (PACBI October 2011: 1). Others accept normalization with resignation, “as the status quo that can be lived with” (PACBI October 2011: 1). More sinister, some impose normalization to “whitewash [Israel’s] violations of international law and human rights” by framing the state of Israel as “enlightened” through its technological and social progressiveness, compared to a general lack of development in Palestine (PACBI October 2011: 1).

One of the most subliminal forms of normalization occurs through peacebuilding initiatives, particularly joint programs that connect Israelis and Palestinians. According to the concept of anti-normalization, there exist major problems within certain peace organizations that Israelis—and internationals—have historically ignored, including a subconscious continuation of the status quo and a lack of acknowledgement toward the injustices of the occupation (Barakat 2012). Anti-normalization does not deny the importance of reconciliation and healing between Israelis and Palestinians; however, peace cannot occur until occupation ends, as was the case in South Africa with respect to apartheid (PACBI October 2011: 1):

“If it is true that political power puts an end to war, that it installs, or tries to install, the reign of peace in civil society, this by no means implies that it suspends the effects of war or neutralizes the disequilibrium revealed in the final battle. The role of political power, on this hypothesis, is

perpetually to re-inscribe this relation through a form of unspoken warfare; to re-inscribe it in social institutions, in economic inequalities, in language, in the bodies themselves of each and every one of us” (Foucault 1980: 90).

By definition, joint peace initiatives facilitate interactions between Israelis and Palestinians in order to educate participants about the experiences, beliefs, or interests of the other—interactions which seldom occur organically due to the physical, linguistic, and ideological separation of Palestinians and Israelis (Chaitin 2011: 55):

“Jews and Palestinians in [Israel] live separate, parallel lives, rarely meeting at all, and when they do, it is usually for instrumental purposes, in universities, shops, or hospitals. The relations between Jewish-Israelis and Palestinians in the Occupied Territories are much worse; they almost exclusively center on soldier-citizen encounters—at the checkpoints or during military invasions—or between settler-citizen encounters that are either instrumental, as when the Palestinians work for Jewish-Israelis who are settlers, or during a violent encounter” (Chaitin 2011: 55).

In other words, joint peace organizations facilitate these interactions, in part, to humanize the other because most general interactions between Israelis and Palestinians amplify difference or promulgate enmity. The facilitation of these programs vary: In some cases, participants engage in group discussions; in other cases, participants meet to establish a business partnership or to film a documentary. Regardless of the general purpose, however, if these initiatives do not acknowledge the existing oppression of Palestinians, they generate problematic outcomes by normalizing the status quo (PACBI October 2011: 1):

“Dialogue, ‘healing,’ and ‘reconciliation’ processes that do not aim to end oppression, regardless of the intentions behind them, serve to privilege oppressive co-existence [...], for they presume the possibility of coexistence before the realization of justice” (PACBI October 2011: 1).

In this context, normalization occurs on two levels—interpersonal and institutional. Interpersonal normalization occurs through people-to-people encounters that alter an individual’s perceptions in a manner that legitimates the status quo, thus normalizing the injustices of occupation and other forms of oppression. Institutional normalization, on the other hand, refers to those elements of peace initiatives that justify, support, or sustain

structural institutions of oppression, such that the current power imbalance between Israelis and Palestinians seems necessary and unavoidable—societally engrained.

Interpersonal Normalization

On an interpersonal level, initiatives that fail to address the current asymmetry of power between Palestinians and Israelis introduce the following problems. First, they establish a false sense of equality among Israeli and Palestinian participants, respectively, suggesting that Palestinians have as much agency as their Israeli counterparts in effecting societal change (Kassis 83). Second, they provide Israeli—and international—participants with a sense of absolution from their complicity in the structural oppression of Palestinians (Kassis 81). This phenomenon breeds complacency, a feeling that one's role in constructing a peaceful society has been fulfilled through an encounter with the other. Third, they may facilitate a setting of exchanged monologues, not genuine discourse (Chaitin 2011). In this setting, Israelis and Palestinians share their own perspectives without actively listening to the other, leading to an affirmation of previously held beliefs about their counterpart. In order to examine the implications of normalization, I will outline these problems by providing examples from existing joint peace projects.

Tiyul Rihla, a nonprofit organization established in Jerusalem in 2011, organizes two-day excursions for Israelis and Palestinians to explore “where the other lives,” specifically Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Beit Jala, near Bethlehem (Tiyul Rihla 2016). During these trips, participants are discouraged from addressing the conflict, or generally the political situation (Frank, personal interview). In an interview, Dara Frank, previous Israeli co-director of Tiyul Rihla, explained the program and its purpose:

“One of the most unique elements of our project is that we are not political. That doesn’t mean just nonpartisan, but we actively try to not talk about the current political situation. [...] A lot of conversations are about the individual’s life and family—friendly conversation to get to know each other. On the last trip, there was a lot of getting to know each other. We try to encourage them to talk about deeper topics, such as history. But they were more interested in making friends” (Frank, personal interview).

According to Frank, this initiative seeks to establish peace through building relationships between Palestinians and Israelis, suggesting that peace is dependent upon both sides, equally; however, mutually humanizing the other will not generate peace, according to the literature on post-colonialism and psychology of the oppressed (Said 1979; Fanon 1967; Foucault 1980):

“The goal of ‘balanced dialogue’ is impossible in a place where there is no balance, a place of forced silence” (Kassis 83).

The overt and intentional avoidance of conversation about the conflict—the oppression of Palestinians, the occupation, the sustained power imbalance—normalizes the status quo by generating a false sense of equality:

“It would be a mistake to take the parallels too far, however, or to assume that the mutuality is more than superficial. This is not a reconciliation between equals: it is a situation where dominance of one over the other prevails, and where after a century of conflict there is an unequivocal winner and a clear loser” (Khalidi 1997: 652-654).

A setting of this nature suggests that Palestinian and Israeli participants equally influence the possibility of peace; they equally propagate or mitigate the conflict. Although these dialogue initiatives encourage Israelis and Palestinians to see the other as an equal, as a human being, they prevent participants from seeing the system of inequality that renders Palestinians subject to an Israeli political, economic, social, historical reality—an Israeli reality in which Palestinian identity is not reciprocally recognized:

“By keeping oppression out of the conversation, it makes it appear as though the problem and the blame belong completely to the individuals [...]. Alternatively, if we frame the problem as oppression, then we necessarily must look for factors outside of the individual—historical and contemporary sociopolitical factors” (David and Derthick 2014: 1-2).

In a system of oppression, power cannot merely be transferred or shared between the oppressed and the oppressor (Foucault 1980: 90). For without justice, “peace” in a setting of occupation merely justifies the existing power relations; “peace” in this setting is “a war continued by other means” (Foucault 1980: 90):

“Power is neither given, nor exchanged, nor recovered, but rather exercised, and [...] only exists in action” (Foucault 1980: 89).

Putting Israelis and Palestinians in the same room, in equal numbers, does not establish an equal setting; it does not transfer to Palestinian participants the same power enjoyed by Israelis within the existing social system. The purpose of *Tiyul Rihla* is to enable Israelis and Palestinians to encounter the other without labels by stepping out of the paradigm of conflict (Frank, personal interview). In reality, however, by not discussing the political situation, they are not stepping out of this paradigm; they are ignoring it:

“Normalization accommodates a basic human desire to pacify turbulence, to make each other (and ourselves) more comfortable in the face of deeply uncomfortable realities, and to express concern about hardship without getting our hands dirty around the roots of its causes” (Kassis 81).

In addition to establishing a false sense of equality, interpersonal normalization also establishes a false sense of absolution, namely among Israeli—or international—participants (Kassis 82). During an interview, Frank shared an anecdote about an Israeli settler¹² who joined one of *Tiyul Rihla*’s excursions. After his encounter with Palestinian participants, the settler explained that the program changed his perspective on Palestinian identity: “while my narrative tells me there is no such thing as a Palestinian people, you

¹² One who lives in a community deemed illegal by international law due to its location on Palestinian land

see yourself as a people, so who am I to deny how you see yourself?” (Frank, personal interview)

Although this acknowledgment of the other is commendable, it is also benign, inactive—concealing a much larger societal problem. By reducing the conflict to this personal level, the settler’s act of engaging with the other, of communicating, of experiencing momentarily a setting intentionally devoid of interpersonal conflict, generated a feeling of absolution from the consequences of oppression and occupation (Kassis 82). In this particular case, the settler’s experience through Tiyul Rihla convinced him that he played his part in the path toward peace: He met with a Palestinian; he recognized the human being in his counterpart; thus, he could return home with a sense of fulfillment. Indeed, he may personally act peacefully toward Palestinian neighbors, but what about the oppressive system that he perpetuates as a settler on Palestinian land? Ultimately, he continues to actively sustain the occupation, a system which prevents any possibility of a just peace while it exists:

“[Normalization] encourages us to forget how to recognize oppression in the first place. It allows us to believe that, by articulating our vague, earnest hope for equality in all things, this equality must also apply to oppressor and oppressed, must absolve the oppressor from its oppression, and must absolve us from condemning it as such” (Kassis 82).

Another principal problem with people-to-people programs is the tendency to converse without genuine dialogue. On the contrary, conversations dissolve into “ethnocentric dialogue,” a term in social psychology referring to communication in which “neither side is really listening to the other, but is rather engaged in dual monologues” (Chaitin 2011: 58):

“People in monologue speak only with themselves and remain separated from the other, while falsely believing that they are engaged in an interpersonal relation” (Chaitin 2011: 59).

In the previous example, I outlined the tendency for dialogue to instill a sense of

absolution due to affirming conversations with the other; the danger of ethnocentric dialogue is the opposite. In this case, a lack of genuine dialogue convinces individuals that their previously held biases and prejudices are true (Chaitin 2011). These problems generally arise from un-sustained, un-facilitated conversations. In these circumstances, Palestinians and Israelis engage with each other for a brief period of time, but they do not establish a relationship; they speak with each other once and, generally, never again (Chaitin 2011). As opposed to the complacency of absolution, this cause of interpersonal normalization tends to justify a continuation of oppression or violence against the other.

An Israeli woman who participated in Tiyul Rihla, for example, shared her experience with me. During the trip, the woman began conversing with a Palestinian man, who breeched the subject of occupation—even though Tiyul Rihla organizers discouraged such discussions (Frank, personal interview). What the woman described as the Palestinian’s angry rant affirmed her previously held beliefs that the other has no intention of seeking peace with her people. Without facilitated and sustained dialogue, which could contextualize the experience of oppression that this Palestinian man embodied, the Israeli woman could not understand the position of the other (Frank, personal interview).

In order to align dialogue with the concept of anti-normalization, to resist subconscious oppression, to establish a just dialogue, facilitators must acknowledge the imbalance of power between Israeli and Palestinian participants, and the purpose of the discussion must be directed toward addressing inequalities between them (PACBI July 2011: 1). The purpose of this approach is not to shame Israeli participants or to label them as “oppressors;” it is to acknowledge structural inequalities and actively empower

Palestinian participants in order to avoid normalizing an inherently oppressive system.

Institutional Normalization

In addition to interpersonal normalization, institutional normalization focuses, not on individual encounters, but on the broader implications of joint peace initiatives that sustain a structure of oppression. Many of these initiatives facilitate programs beyond dialogue that address a particular societal need, such as economic empowerment or health care (Chaitin 2011). The problem arises when these programs seek to offer solutions to infrastructural needs without addressing the root of these needs—injustice, lack of civil liberties, restrictions on movement, etc. Instead, these projects engage Israelis and Palestinians to provide humanitarian assistance as a platform for establishing peace. Most problematic, however, the programs offer humanitarian solutions to Palestinian society through Israeli institutions, suggesting and perhaps cultivating dependency (Fanon 1967). To examine this example of normalization, I will analyze two joint peace initiatives, the Peres Center for Peace and the Israel Palestine Cooperative for Economic Expansion (IPCEE).

Established in 1996 by former Israeli President Shimon Peres, the Peres Center for Peace seeks to “promote lasting peace and advancement in the Middle East” through “tolerance and cooperation,” as well as “economic and technological development” (Peres Center 2016). The Center focuses on three primary types of initiatives, namely peace education, business, and health care (Peres Center 2016).

With respect to the latter, the Center operates a program called Saving Children. Since 2003, the project provides Palestinian children with complex medical treatment in Israeli hospitals (Vogel, personal interview). If a child cannot receive necessary treatment

in Palestine, the Center arranges for the patient to be treated in Israel by an Israeli doctor. To carry out this project, the Center acquires necessary travel permits for the Palestinian children and their guardians, communicates with Palestinian health care providers who refer the patient, and links the patient to necessary medical staff in Israel (Vogel, personal interview).

On one hand, it is easy to identify the benefits of this project: Palestinian children who are ill need essential health care, which the Peres Center ensures through its network. However, this project represents the problem of institutional normalization because it offers a solution to a fundamental need within Palestinian society through Israeli institutions. Why are Palestinian hospitals deprived of the same resources as Israeli hospitals?

As another example, the Israel Palestine Cooperative for Economic Expansion (IPCEE) organizes a health program similar to that of the Peres Center. Established in 2011, IPCEE is an American nonprofit seeking to connect Israeli and Palestinian communities through improved economic opportunities (Zwang, personal interview). IPCEE's primary project focuses on improving the health sector through a series of professional trainings (Zwang, personal interview). Participants receive one- to six-year fellowships to train as nurses, physicians, and technicians. Nurses and physicians complete the program in Israeli hospitals, and technicians travel to Dallas, Texas, for a six-month course with MediCenter International (Zwang, personal interview). During an interview, Robert Zwang, founder and chief executive officer of IPCEE, explained the impetus for this program:

“When [medical] equipment is purchased, either in Israel or the West Bank, its service is determined by the vendor. In the West Bank, if the Palestinians can purchase the equipment or it's donated, the vendor must be able to get into the West Bank, and the vendor must be paid. If the

vendor is not paid [...] the vendor may not send the technicians to repair the equipment” (Zwang, personal interview).

Both the Peres Center and IPCEE perpetuate a system that is fundamentally unequal and represents a tragic cost of oppression—a health-infrastructure deficit so severe that Palestinians cannot receive proper care. Instead of empowering Palestinian institutions, the Peres Center and IPCEE perpetuate the status quo by maintaining Palestinian dependency on Israeli health care. This example of normalization is problematic for a number of reasons.

First, with respect to the Peres Center, the project cannot support all Palestinian children who need treatment. Second, Palestinian adults simply do not have access to this treatment because they are not eligible for the program (Vogel, personal interview). Third, the occupation is the *reason* this treatment is both necessary and inaccessible: Palestinians are restricted from movement; thus, they cannot travel to Israeli hospitals if necessary, and they cannot develop their own medical infrastructure (Khalidi 1997). The Peres Center—perhaps unintentionally—ignores this fact. In the case of IPCEE, the program underestimates the existing medical institutions within Palestine, including medical schools which train nurses and doctors. In addition, offering a training for technicians in the United States assumes that the same—expensive—medical resources will be available to the trainee back in Palestine; however, given the current situation, this assumption is unfounded.

Creating a training for doctors in a new environment, in a new country, is not inherently problematic; there are many programs that follow such a model. In this case, however, the project exists in a setting of oppression, unintentionally empowering Israeli institutions by effusing their norms—creating a system in which Israeli medicine

administered in Israeli institutions becomes the norm, the necessary treatment option for Palestinians.

Both the Peres Center and IPCEE normalize oppression by making it seem necessary, essential, unavoidable for Palestinians to travel to Israel for treatment or training—a difficult, often prohibited, journey due to restricted movement, and an idea that creates Palestinian dependency and ignores the need for improved resources in Palestine itself (Fanon 1967; Pappé 2004). A just peace requires an empowered, not colonized, not dictated, not arbitrarily shaped, Palestine (Fanon 1967: 95-96). Palestinians need access to the resources that would lead to empowerment, not dependency.

In the context of anti-normalization, however, this particular example of institutional normalization poses a challenging dilemma. While it is important to ensure Palestinians are able to improve their health care options *in* Palestine, ill children cannot wait for the necessary infrastructure to be developed. In this case, the Peres Center provides a temporary solution. As a result, the concept of anti-normalization argues that, for the purpose of survival, engagement with Israelis may occur through a normalizing institution; however, the program itself *is* normalizing and thus can be considered only temporary (PACBI October 2011: 1). There must be a simultaneous effort to empower Palestinians to develop a stronger health infrastructure (PACBI October 2011: 1).

This dilemma serves as a relevant example of the nuanced interpretations of normalization. Joint peace initiatives engage in normalization in different ways depending on the context; therefore, anti-normalization categorizes the appropriate response to oppression into three distinct settings because the political and social reality

is different for Palestinians in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza respectively (PACBI October 2011: 1). The definition and implications of normalization change based on place.

First, the military occupation of the West Bank—and East Jerusalem—and extensive restrictions on Gaza comprise one tier of normalization (PACBI October 2011: 1). Second, racial discrimination by Israelis and Israeli institutions within the state oppresses Palestinian citizens of Israel (PACBI October 2011: 1). And, third, the participation of the global community in various Israeli institutions that continue this system of oppression comprises the final category (PACBI October 2011: 1). Additionally, with respect to the global community, this oppression manifests in the rejection of the Palestinian right of return—and other “UN-sanctioned rights of Palestinian refugees” (PACBI June 2007: 1).

The West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza

With respect to the first category, normalization in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza assumes the following definition:

“[...] the participation in any project, initiative or activity, in Palestine or internationally, that aims (implicitly or explicitly) to bring together Palestinians (and/or Arabs) and Israelis (people or institutions) without placing as its goal resistance to and exposure of the Israeli occupation and all forms of discrimination and oppression against the Palestinian people” (PACBI November 2007: 1).

According to this definition, Palestinians and Israelis are prohibited from any interaction that does not focus on a resistance framework because “everyday, ordinary relations” would ignore the occupation of Palestinian territory, a “harmful impression of normalcy in a patently abnormal situation of colonial oppression” (PACBI October 2011: 1). To be clear, anti-normalization does not advocate for total disengagement from Israelis. On the contrary, interaction with Israelis is acceptable given that such interaction

focuses on acknowledging and resisting institutions that continue to oppress the Palestinian population:

“This is not a call to refrain from understanding Israelis, their society and polity. It is a call to condition any such knowledge and any such contact on the principles of resistance until the time when comprehensive Palestinian and other Arab rights are met” (PACBI October 2011: 1).

The examples of Tiyyul Rihla and the Peres Center for Peace reflect problems associated with this tier of normalization. To further iterate the manifestation of normalization in this context, I will also analyze the Jerusalem International YMCA. Founded in 1878, this organization offers peace education, recreational, and cultural programs for Israelis and Palestinians to create an environment “where political and religious jealousies can be forgotten and international unity fostered and developed”¹³ (Jerusalem International YMCA 2016).

“Basically we feel that even just giving people a place to work out together, they form friendships that have nothing to do with the conflict—without any basis of having to talk about the issues; it is just personal, one to one” (Asaraf, personal interview).

Within this context, the community center normalizes the status quo, perpetuating a system of oppression, by bringing together Israelis and Palestinians for purposes other than functional necessities, meaning employment, health care, or education (PACBI October 2011: 1). By establishing intercultural cooperation, the community center conceals from Israeli society the lines of inequality that exist between Palestinians and their Jewish neighbors.

For example, the YMCA offers various programs through its youth department, including a choir which travels around the world to perform (Asaraf, personal interview). Because the choir is not organized for the purpose of acknowledging or addressing the

¹³ This comment was made by Lord Allenby, the British official who inaugurated the building (Asaraf, personal interview).

systematic oppression of Palestinians, it suggests to audiences—both in Israel and Palestine, as well as abroad—that Palestinians and Israelis can achieve peace within the current context, thus failing to convey the asymmetry of power between the two sides. Without an end to the occupation, an end to this norm of oppression, a just peace cannot exist.

The YMCA also hosts a series of recreational programs, including art classes and athletic clubs, for both children and adults (Asaraf, personal interview). These programs reflect similar problems outlined above: Without direct condemnation of the occupation, without constructive and facilitated dialogue, the program ignores the injustices that Palestinians face. Thus, these programs fall under the first category of normalization. Like the case of Tiyul Rihla, by engaging in the YMCA's joint initiatives, community members either experience a false sense of equality, assume absolution from their complicity in the oppression of Palestinians, or engage in ethnocentric dialogue that prevents genuine understanding of the other.

The State of Israel

The second category of normalization refers to Palestinian citizens of Israel—those who did not migrate from their homes after the *nakba* of 1948 but remained in, what then became, the state of Israel (PACBI October 2011: 1). These Palestinians are expected to uphold different standards of anti-normalization due to their inevitable engagement with other Israelis (PACBI October 2011: 1). Because of their situation as citizens of Israel, they face “coercive everyday relations,” meaning they must engage in certain Israeli institutions—which are generally considered normalizing—for the purpose of survival (PACBI October 2011: 1). For example, Palestinian citizens of Israel are not required to

disengage from daily employment or public services, such as education and health care (PACBI October 2011: 1). However, to interact with Israelis for any purpose other than survival is strictly prohibited. To participate in Israeli cultural institutions or international conferences as an Israeli citizen constitutes avoidable normalization (PACBI October 2011: 1). Such engagement would suggest that Palestinians and Israelis can coexist within the context of the current status quo, a context of oppression (PACBI October 2011: 1).

To examine this complex category of normalization, I will examine an Arab-Israeli joint peace organization that functions strictly within Israel. In this way, I will analyze how the nuanced identity of Palestinian citizens of Israel complicates the concept of normalization.

Al Manarah, an organization founded in 2005, facilitates advocacy and empowerment programs for Arabs in Israel with disabilities (Al Manarah 2016). The founder, Abbass Abbass, is a Palestinian citizen of Israel, who lives in Nazareth (Abbass, personal interview). As someone born with a congenital visual disability, Abbass decided to dedicate his life to a career at the intersection of minority rights and disability awareness (Abbass, personal interview). Through Al Manarah, Abbass provides essential resources to ensure that Arab Israelis, like himself, have the opportunity to actively participate in society (Abbass, personal interview):

“Unfortunately, people with disabilities in the Arab society are doubly discriminated—on one hand, based on the grounds of their disabilities and, on the other hand, based on their affiliation with the Arab/Palestinian minority in Israel” (Abbass, personal interview).

Although Abbass focuses on the empowerment of Palestinian citizens of Israel, several elements of his organization would be considered normalization because they engage Israeli institutions for non-essential purposes (PACBI October 2011: 1). In

particular, Abbas has participated in numerous international leadership and social entrepreneurship programs as an Israeli citizen:

“In 2007, I started my journey to the U.S. I have been selected as an international visitor by the State Department. There, I participated in a program called ‘Equality and Accessibility for People with Disabilities.’ I visited several organizations and governmental agencies in 3 areas—D.C., New York, and Maryland” (Abbas, personal interview).

In 2009, Abbas was selected as an Ashoka fellow, a prestigious international designation (Abbas, personal interview). He also became the first Arab Israeli on the advisory committee at the Israeli Ministry of Justice for the Commission on the Rights of People with Disabilities (Abbas, personal interview). He has spoken at conferences in San Francisco, Paris, Geneva, and throughout the Middle East and North Africa (Abbas, personal interview). During all of these programs, Abbas has identified himself as an Israeli citizen, an Arab Israeli.

According to the concept of normalization, when Abbas represents Arab Israelis to the global community, he normalizes the situation by suggesting a false sense of equality. As a Palestinian citizen of Israel, Abbas faces institutional discrimination, denied the same privileges of citizenship enjoyed by his Jewish Israeli counterparts. Therefore, when he represents Arab Israelis abroad—without directly acknowledging the oppression of Palestinian citizens of Israel—he normalizes the inequality of Israeli society.

This category of normalization is complex because it defines Abbas in terms of his Palestinian identity, yet it fails to acknowledge his Israeli identity as an equal component of his self-awareness (Abbas, personal interview). Because the concept of normalization focuses on oppression against Palestinians by Israeli institutions, it constructs a questionable binary that does not fully represent Palestinian citizens of Israel. Although Palestinian identity has formed, in part, in opposition to the Israeli other, the two

identities are not mutually exclusive (Abbass, personal interview). Some Palestinian citizens of Israel, such as Abbass, identify equally as both Israeli and Palestinian. This nuanced understanding of identity in the context of Israel and Palestine complicates the idea of normalization.

A Global Context

The third category of normalization focuses on a global context. It primarily relates to situations outside of Israel and Palestine that legitimate the current asymmetrical power relations between the two sides. This form of normalization manifests, not only through Palestinians within the diaspora, but also through the broader international community. In this global context, normalization occurs when international actors participate in events or initiatives that ignore “the power structures and relations embedded in oppression,” falsely presenting Israelis and Palestinians as equal players with symmetrical positions of power (PACBI October 2011: 1).

With respect to joint peace initiatives, international organizations often significantly impact civil society in Israel and Palestine. In order to examine normalization perpetuated by global peace initiatives, I will examine the Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP), a nonprofit based in Washington, D.C. This organization serves as an umbrella support network for joint Israeli-Palestinian peace initiatives—both in the Holy Land and globally (ALLMEP 2014). Currently, ALLMEP serves 90 affiliated organizations, including many of the organizations outlined previously in this chapter (ALLMEP 2014). The organizations that ALLMEP supports focus primarily on people-to-people peacebuilding initiatives. As a support network, ALLMEP serves its affiliates by assisting with their financial needs, providing more than \$80 million in funding from

American institutions (ALLMEP 2014).

As an independent organization and a benefactor for dozens of joint Israeli-Palestinian organizations, ALLMEP participates in normalization in various capacities. First, by sponsoring people-to-people organizations in Israel and Palestine, ALLMEP is complicit in perpetuating the status quo through the problematic programs organized by these groups—such as the Peres Center for Peace and IPCEE, which are ALLMEP affiliates (ALLMEP 2014). Second, as an American organization, ALLMEP directly engages United States government officials on behalf of these organizations in order to gain support for people-to-people programs in Israel and Palestine (ALLMEP 2014):

“Since its inception, it has coordinated more than 600 meetings with Congress, the White House, Israeli and Palestinian leaders, prime ministers, foreign ministers, the State Department, USAID, European and Arab governments, and the media, thus promoting and growing people-to-people peacebuilding efforts in Israel/Palestine” (ALLMEP 2014).

ALLMEP continues to lobby the United States Congress for funding and has gained 112 signatures from senators and U.S. representatives to show support for the passage of ALLMEP’s appropriations request (ALLMEP 2014). Through these endeavors, ALLMEP extends normalization to an international context: First, ALLMEP’s activities conceal from American stakeholders the oppressive setting in which Palestinians live by suggesting that peace is a reciprocal process in which Palestinians and Israelis resolve the conflict within the current system of oppression. Second, ALLMEP exercises significant power in the context of joint Israeli-Palestinian peace initiatives because of its political capital and access to funding. As a result, ALLMEP does not passively support normalization but actively perpetuates it through the organization’s political and financial influence—even if it does so subconsciously or unintentionally.

More broadly, normalization within the global context occurs through the

continuation of the current political discourse, which privileges a narrative of peace and reconciliation without, first, acknowledging existing oppressive institutions that prevent a just peace. Within this context, the term “peace” has a varied meaning; in the United States, this term has been exploited for political purposes to suggest that Israelis and Palestinians can achieve peace and reconciliation as equal partners—thus ignoring the “dominance of one over the other” (Khalidi 1997: 652-654). If Palestinians interact with Israelis to foster coexistence, the international community may view this engagement as an indication of positive social change—equivalent to peace, blind to oppression. The Israeli government can use this engagement as a “fig-leaf” in order to continue overt oppression of Palestinians (PACBI October 2011: 1). Khalidi succinctly explains the significance of normalization through political discourse, through the word “peace” in an international context:

“Each of these terms has set conditions not only for perceptions, but also for possibilities” (Khalidi 2013: ix).

The term “peace,” generally speaking, evokes a positive response: ‘who would not support peace?’ However, its actual implications challenge the very possibility of a just peace—a peace in which Palestinians do not live in a system of oppression.

Co-Resistance

According to the concept of normalization, joint Israeli-Palestinian peace initiatives are not inherently problematic (PACBI July 2011: 1). It is possible to pursue peace initiatives without also normalizing the conflict. These non-normalizing peace initiatives are termed “co-resistance,” as opposed to coexistence, because they clearly and directly acknowledge and confront the occupation and oppression of Palestinians through their programs (PACBI July 2011: 1). According to PACBI, this resistance framework

includes “recognition of the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people and [...] the commitment to resist, in diverse ways, all forms of oppression” (PACBI October 2011: 1). Unless initiatives that enable dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians support “co-resistance,” then the dialogue is merely a subconscious form of normalization (PACBI 2011: 1).

Maia Carter Hallward, associate professor of political science and international affairs at Kennesaw State University, defines co-resistance initiatives as those which incorporate collective civil disobedience through protests and various demonstrations in order to expose the inhumanity of the conflict, particularly by challenging the occupation and resisting the inequality of Palestinians (Hallward 2011). As a result, participants cause the sustained occupation to be costlier to the Israeli government, thus directly confronting this major barrier to establishing peace while also connecting Palestinians and Israelis through a common vision (PACBI October 2011: 1). This concept reflects elements of psychologist Gordon Allport’s contact hypothesis, which argues that contact with the other eliminates previously held biases if dialogue is facilitated effectively and participants strive toward a “superordinate goal,” meaning a unified effort to fulfill a task collectively (Bordens 2002). This approach pursues peace *through* justice.

In addition, co-resistance initiatives involve nonviolent direct action as a means to reduce aggression, primarily by making conflict apparent and thus exposing its impact on a given community or people. According to Hallward, “constructive confrontation appeals to the humanity of broader society, especially when nonviolent demonstrators are targeted with coercive force” (Hallward 2011).

Furthermore, independently coordinated projects serve as another form of co-

resistance; they include specialized programs that address specific challenges facing Palestinian or Israeli communities respectively (Barakat 2012). Therefore, Palestinians and Israelis pursue a shared goal but organize and operate independently. As a result, Palestinians and Israelis maintain autonomy in addressing the conflict—and thus avoid appropriation of the movement—while gaining indirect support from the other, thus mobilizing the respective communities to achieve a collective justice and peace (Barakat 2012).

In addition, Hallward identifies “awareness-raising” as another important element of joint initiatives, particularly those which involve international participants (Hallward 2011). Awareness-raising comprises various tasks, such as organizing educational events or facilitating the distribution of unbiased information through media outlets and research publications in order to achieve “discursive change” (Hallward 2011), a discourse that perpetuates the oppression of Palestinians and normalizes the status quo.

Resisting Oppression, Building Peace

As an example of co-resistance, Ta’ayush, a joint Palestinian-Israeli activist organization, focuses on bringing Palestinians, Israelis, and internationals together to collectively resist the occupation through civil disobedience objectives, such as weekly protests outside Israeli settlements or by escorting Palestinian farmers across restricted areas within the occupied territories in order to cultivate their crops on adjacent farms (Ta’ayush 2016). Although the organization draws numerous participants from throughout Israel and Palestine, Ta’ayush also reaches an extensive global audience due to its documentation of injustices facing Palestinians under occupation (Ta’ayush 2016).

Another example of co-resistance, the Palestinian Peace Coalition, is an

independently coordinated initiative. The organization, based in Ramallah, works in coordination with the Israeli political advocacy group Yes to an Agreement (Palestinian Peace Coalition 2016); however, the Coalition independently pursues leadership training and peacebuilding seminars, particularly among Palestinian women and youth (Abboud, personal interview). The purpose of these programs is to sustain the organizational capacity for local activism in Palestine. The organization collaborates with Yes to an Agreement to provide seminars for both Israelis and Palestinians, including politicians, religious leaders, and community members (Abboud, personal interview). But the main focus of the Coalition is to further empower the Palestinian people in the skills of negotiation, leadership, and communication in order to end the occupation and establish a just peace (Abboud, personal interview).

Conclusions

Normalization occurs through joint peace initiatives that fail to directly acknowledge and confront the injustices of occupation and the oppression of Palestinians. To normalize is not necessarily intentional; joint peace initiatives often perpetuate normalizing programs subconsciously. As a result, major problems among peacebuilding organizations have emerged, primarily through the unintentional continuation of the status quo. However, joint peace initiatives are not intrinsically problematic. Within the context of normalization, peacebuilding programs can avoid normalizing activities through “co-resistance” initiatives, which clearly and directly illuminate and address the occupation and oppression of Palestinians through their programs.

Chapter Four

Reconsidering the Paradigm of Peace

We identified the seeds from which the anti-normalization movement developed. We determined the impetus behind the movement, the problematic attempts at peacebuilding. We outlined a possible solution to normalizing peace initiatives through co-resistance. Now, we shall return to our analogy of the lemon tree: At this point, we will continue analyzing the anti-normalization movement by considering its trunk—the concept, the ideology—and its branches—the practice, the implementation. From there, we will identify the fruits of this movement, for which I will provide specific examples, focusing on both problems and benefits of the anti-normalization movement.

In Chapter 4, I will analyze the ideology of anti-normalization and examine the movement in practice. I will examine specific cases in which anti-normalization persuaded or compelled joint peace initiatives to address or change normalizing projects. Finally, I will outline problems within the movement that challenge its efficacy and sustainability.

Through my research, I argue that the anti-normalization movement is effectively redefining the concept of peace. The movement has compelled or convinced joint peace

initiatives to recognize and acknowledge normalizing activity in order to develop programs that comply with co-resistance strategies. In this way, joint peace organizations are acknowledging that peace cannot exist without justice. With that said, however, I argue that the anti-normalization movement also faces several problems, including inconsistency, ineffective monitoring, lack of leadership, and, in some cases, the promotion of violence.

As a concept, as an ideology, anti-normalization demands an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and the fulfillment of “individual, collective, and national rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people,” which includes the elimination of oppressive policies, such as arbitrary and unlawful administrative detentions, the continued construction of the separation barrier, and proliferation of illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank (PACBI October 2011: 1). Within this movement, Palestinian activists focus on two primary goals that Palestinians must achieve prior to pursuing normal relations with their Israeli neighbors. First, Palestinians must be afforded equal protections, and, second, Palestinians must address internal challenges, such as infrastructural development and empowerment of civil institutions (Barakat 2012).

The anti-normalization movement emerged in 2007, through a publication by the Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI). Although PACBI and the BDS campaign exercised authority in defining the concept, the movement has developed without central leadership (Salem 2005). Unlike the BDS campaign, which operates as a cohesive, structured, organized international movement with a national committee, anti-normalization operates as an ideology, free to interpretation by Palestinian civil society actors—an ideology exercised and experienced differently based on different

perspectives of activists (Salem 2005). This element of the movement offers broad discretion to anti-normalization activists, who thus have the authority to apply the concept in various contexts to confront nuanced forms of normalization (Salem 2005). On the other hand, this element of the movement results in inconsistency and generally leads to a liberal application of the term “normalizing” to institutions that arguably are not (Asideh, personal interview).

In practice, the movement confronts normalizing institutions through nonviolent tactics. Anti-normalization activists target joint peace organizations by disrupting or boycotting their programs and labeling them—or individual peacemakers—as “normalizers.” As a result, the organizations have seen a decrease in the numbers of Palestinian participants in joint programs due to calls for boycott—or fear among Palestinians that, if they participate, they will face social exclusion (Awad, personal interview). Other activists approach anti-normalization through discursive tactics. This expression of anti-normalization often occurs at universities, through publications of academics, newspaper articles by students, or course lectures and discussions (Dajani, personal interview).

The anti-normalization movement primarily functions outside of political institutions in Palestine; it is a force of civil society. Therefore, it is not necessarily implemented by the Palestinian Authority—not by Fatah, nor Hamas—though government officials may support or participate in the anti-normalization movement (Salem 2005). Broadly, anti-normalization, in practice, attracts young Palestinians. The movement operates in the West Bank and Israel proper primarily in a secular context, motivated by a political and social struggle for self-determination (Salem 2005: 100-109).

However, anti-normalization exists in Gaza primarily within a religious context. From the perspective of anti-normalization activists in Gaza, Palestine is considered *waqf*, or Islamic holy land, and thus must be freed from oppression and occupation (Salem 2005: 100-109). As a global movement, anti-normalization has limited impact abroad. It primarily affects international organizations through their projects *in* Israel and Palestine. ALLMEP and IPCEE, for example, will not face social pressure in the United States, but their programs in Israel and Palestine may attract disruptions or calls for boycott by anti-normalization activists.

Targeted by the anti-normalization movement, joint peace organizations have responded in diverse ways. On one hand, some organizations have opposed anti-normalization, publicly rejecting the movement as “anti-peace” (Baskin 2015: 1). On the other hand, some organizations have embraced the demands of the movement and adapted their programs to uphold the positions of anti-normalization in order to eliminate the asymmetrical power dynamic between Israeli and Palestinian participants (Alpert; Atsmon, personal interviews).

In order to more clearly define anti-normalization in practice, despite its nuance and complexity, I will explain the implications of the movement, namely its influence in defining and shaping the discourse with respect to peacebuilding. On one hand, anti-normalization is redefining peace—as a term and as a goal. The movement has compelled or persuaded joint peace initiatives to consider potential problems within their programs—problems which normalize the status quo. On the other hand, anti-normalization, as a concept subject to interpretation, lacks consistency and effective monitoring, in some cases, and promotes intimidation and violence, in others.

Redefining Peace

As a movement, anti-normalization has begun to shift the paradigm of peacebuilding within Israel and Palestine. In many cases, joint organizations have learned and accepted the arguments of anti-normalization, or felt pressure to uphold its standards, whether or not they actually agree with the movement. As a result, joint peace initiatives are taking greater precautions to resist normalization; they are acknowledging Palestinian rights, confronting oppressive institutions, and condemning the occupation.

In order to examine the influence of anti-normalization on joint peace initiatives, I will analyze how four organizations have responded to anti-normalization—and, in some cases, reshaped their programs in order to align with the demands of the anti-normalization movement. The first organization, Just Vision, embraces the ideology of anti-normalization and actively adheres to the principles of the movement. The second organization, Israeli-Palestine: Creative Regional Initiatives firmly opposes anti-normalization and publicly resists the movement. The third organization, Windows Channels for Communication, supports the ideology of anti-normalization but disagrees with the manner in which the movement is practiced. Finally, the fourth organization, the Holy Land Trust, upholds the demands of anti-normalization because of fear; if the organization fails to uphold the movement's demands, the costs could significantly impact the organization. Through these four examples, I argue that the anti-normalization movement is shifting the paradigm of peacebuilding—by either inspiring or compelling organizations to reevaluate the impact of their programs.

Just Vision, an organization founded in 2003, firmly supports anti-normalization. The organization seeks to raise awareness about nonviolent efforts among Palestinians

and Israelis to “end the occupation and build a future of freedom, dignity, and equality for all” (Just Vision 2015). With offices in Jerusalem and the United States, the organization empowers journalists and human rights activists who create “award-winning films, digital media and targeted public education campaigns that undermine stereotypes, inspire commitment and galvanize action” (Just Vision 2015).

Just Vision has produced five full-length documentaries focused on the experiences of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and joint Israeli-Palestinian demonstrations toward ending the occupation (Just Vision 2015). The organization has also compiled interviews with grassroots leaders and created a new media platform for Israeli journalists to “[transform] the current discourse in Israel [...] aimed at ending the occupation and promoting values of pluralism and equality” (Just Vision 2015).

During an interview, Emma Alpert, the organization’s public engagement coordinator, explained the efforts of Just Vision to uphold the standards of the anti-normalization movement. The organization seeks to highlight only those grassroots leaders, activists, and human rights defenders—both Israeli and Palestinian—who are pursuing an end to the occupation (Alpert, personal interview):

“A normalizing organization would be working to promote cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians without seeing the problematic inequalities that currently exist at various levels of society. I think the only kinds of interactions between both groups that are actually constructive and acceptable under the guidelines of anti-normalization are those that are working to dismantle these systems of inequality and are working to build towards a future of equality and justice for both peoples” (Alpert, personal interview).

According to Alpert, organizations that engage both Israelis and Palestinians must be particularly deliberate about their programming because being labeled as a “normalizer” is a serious problem for nonprofits. According to Alpert, “the stamp of ‘normalizing’ is often thrown down very loosely; it’s an easy way to criticize an

organization or discredit an organization” (Alpert, personal interview). Just Vision does engage with Israelis, but Alpert explains that opinions among anti-normalization activists vary around the question of interaction with Israelis:

“There are some people who might say it’s normalizing to work with any Israeli or any Israeli institution. What we uphold is that we work with Israelis and Israeli institutions that are working to end the occupation and recognize the structural inequalities that are at the root of the conflict” (Alpert, personal interview).

For example, Just Vision is completing a film called *The Wanted 18*, which is directed by a Palestinian. The film highlights an incident that occurred in the town of Beit Sahour during the First Intifada. Residents of the town, on the outskirts of Bethlehem, acquired eighteen cows and began a dairy farm to produce local milk and thus boycott Israeli milk products. The Israeli government, however, declared the cows a threat to Israeli national security and sanctioned a military campaign to shut down the dairy. In the film, there are interviews with Israeli military commanders involved in the case (Alpert, personal interview). Palestinian audiences viewing the film have asked, “How did you gain access to Israelis for these interviews?” Alpert explains, “Very few people actually bring up the term normalization but there’s an implicit questioning of why do we need to include Israeli voices in this Palestinian story” (Alpert, personal interview). Because the filmmakers were not granted access to military photos or documents, they had to reach out to the Israeli military commanders for interviews to corroborate the story. According to Alpert, “It’s two peoples telling the same story and in some ways giving more credibility to the story itself” (Alpert, personal interview).

In addition, the filmmakers have to consider where the film will be played. “This is much more closely related to normalization and anti-normalization,” Alpert says, because the anti-normalization movement demands that films should not be shown in areas

complicit with the occupation. Though Just Vision desires to show its films in Israel, it seeks to uphold the demands of anti-normalization. Thus, the film is shown in Israel, but it is presented in community centers curated by Palestinians (Alpert, personal interview).

Although Just Vision actively supports anti-normalization, the organization recognizes some problems with the movement. The primary challenge is interpreting the positions of anti-normalization. Sometimes Palestinian activists misinterpret or disagree on the movement's demands:

“I think people are very quick to criticize, especially in times—like right now—when things are particularly tense. There's sort of a knee-jerk reaction to anything that could be construed as normalizing. I also would say pro-Palestinian voices may be quick to label things as normalizing without actually considering the project itself or the campaign itself” (Alpert, personal interview).

According to Alpert, it is a “very serious accusation” if an organization is considered “normalizing.” The organization may lose credibility or funding, and it may not be able to implement programs or distribute its published work (Alpert, personal interview).

However, Alpert explains that Israeli responses to anti-normalization have also created major problems. These responses branded the movement without a full understanding of its implications: “There are a lot of pro-Israeli groups or Zionist groups that are very quick to label anti-normalization campaigns as anti-Semitic or as shutting down the conversation” without recognizing the reasons for the movement—the structural inequality that exists (Alpert, personal interview). Alpert argues that these perspectives represent those who do not understand the anti-normalization movement as it was intended; that is, “to avoid relations that normalize the structural inequality” between Israelis and Palestinians (Alpert, personal interview).

An example of this reductive approach to anti-normalization appeared in a

Jerusalem Post column, written by one of the founders of the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI), renamed Israeli-Palestine: Creative Regional Initiatives in 2013. Established in Jerusalem in 1988, IPCRI is a think tank dedicated to “on-the-ground, peace building work and public outreach” (IPCRI 2015). IPCRI, however, was identified as a “normalizing” organization, namely by PACBI (Baskin 2015: 1). Anti-normalization activists labeled the organization in this way because its programs bring together Israelis and Palestinians without the primary goal of exposing the oppression of Palestinians. For example, a key platform of IPCRI for sustainable peace is environmental cooperation. The organization implements projects that bring Israelis and Palestinians together to support sustainability efforts and solve pressing environmental challenges (IPCRI 2015); however, PACBI claims this approach does not support a resistance framework and thus normalizes the oppression of Palestinians (PACBI October 2011: 1). In addition, within the Research and Information Department, IPCRI presents reports on various political issues, such as disagreements between Israelis and Palestinians about “Jerusalem, borders, settlements, and security,” which the organization provides to political leaders (IPCRI 2015). The department also organizes dialogue, or “Track II Diplomacy,” between Israeli and Palestinian community leaders (IPCRI 2015). However, these political initiatives highlight arguments on both sides without explicitly acknowledging and confronting oppressive institutions (PACBI October 2011: 1). As evidenced by the following quote, IPCRI initiatives—unintentionally—perpetuate a false sense of equality among Palestinians and Israelis:

“IPCRI recognizes the rights of the Jewish people and the Palestinian people to fulfill their national interests of self-determination within their own states and we promote these two states to establish peaceful relations” (IPCRI 2015).

In response, through a column in the Jerusalem Post, a founder of IPCRI, Gershon

Baskin, expressed strong opposition to the anti-normalization movement. In the column, Baskin calls anti-normalization activists “thugs” and argues that IPCRI’s—and other organizations’—programs have been threatened by the movement (Baskin 2015: 1). He claims that, despite its label, IPCRI does not participate in “normalizing” activities:

“I have never conducted an activity that I would call ‘normalization.’ I have always been an ‘anti-normalizer,’ never accepting the idea that the State of Israel and the Jewish people can or should deny the Palestinian people their right to self-determination—the very same right that I claim as a Zionist. [...] I have always worked so that contact and exposure between the two peoples opens doors to building compassion, empathy and understanding which can be translated into political actions to make change” (Baskin 2015: 1).

According to the anti-normalization movement, however, IPCRI fails to recognize the asymmetry of power between Palestinians and Israelis and fails to actuate active resistance; thus, the dialogue is not translated into social change but generates a sense of absolution and fulfillment in itself (PACBI October 2011: 1).

Some of Baskin’s arguments, however, are not wholly unfounded. He does explain one of the problematic elements of anti-normalization in practice (which I will analyze later in this chapter). He explains, “The anti-normalization people are creating political barriers backed up with not only threats of violence, but actual violence” (Baskin 2015: 1). However, although violence has been an issue in past anti-normalization demonstrations, it certainly does not define the movement, and it is clearly prohibited in PACBI’s documents that outline the demands of anti-normalization (PACBI October 2011: 1). Though Baskin raises an important issue, his rhetoric frames the anti-normalization movement not as activism but terrorism (Baskin 2015: 1).

“This is because they do not support peace with Israel. They do not support the end of the occupation from the territories Israel conquered in 1967; they want to see the elimination of Israel from the River to the Sea and see in its place Palestine. They may be secularists compared to Hamas, but their political goals are the same as those of Hamas” (Baskin 2015: 1).

Through these statements, Baskin inaccurately suggests that the anti-normalization

movement seeks to erase the state of Israel or continue the conflict. The documented positions of the anti-normalization movement clearly state the opposite (PACBI October 2011: 1). Baskin bases his understanding of the movement solely on limited personal experience.

“These are a bunch of hypocrites and thugs who use violence to threaten people who don't agree with them. They have no understanding of democracy and they are doing real damage to the Palestinian cause. They have no understanding of how to wage a successful political campaign and it is time that the Palestinian leadership and people stand up and tell these people to cease and desist” (Baskin 2015: 1).

This reductive perspective reflects the problematic Israeli response to anti-normalization that Alpert mentioned during her interview. By refusing to learn about the movement, by defining the entire movement based on the violent actions of a few outliers, Baskin rejects the opportunity to understand potentially problematic elements of peace initiatives. This, Alpert argues, is a problem; joint peace programs act without understanding anti-normalization as it was intended and thus perpetuate situations that legitimate structural inequality (Alpert, personal interview).

Just Vision and IPCRI lie at two poles: one firmly supports anti-normalization; the other firmly opposes it. In many cases, however, joint programs have more nuanced perspectives. Some broadly accept the ideology of anti-normalization but do not support the movement because of its propensity to misidentify organizations as normalizing or, in rare cases, lead to violence. As an example, Windows Channels for Communication, a joint peace initiative, began in 1991 in Tel Aviv-Jaffa. The organization focuses on empowering Israeli and Palestinian youth, “working together and separately, as active citizens toward ending the occupation, discrimination, and other violations of human rights” (Windows 2015). Windows engages youth in long-term programs through education about the conflict and through independent journalism. The organization

comprises leadership and participants from Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza: “Windows activities are designed, developed and propelled by and for members of these three communities, thus ensuring equal representation of the voices and needs of each” (Windows 2015).

The organization’s projects focus on two overarching themes—education and media (Windows 2015). To educate participants, the organization hosts sessions with Israelis and Palestinians in all three contexts (Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza); sometimes these groups participate together, and sometimes they meet separately (Atsmon, personal interview). These initiatives enable the youth to learn about other narratives of the conflict and voice their own experiences, as Israelis or Palestinians (Windows 2015). In addition, the youth participate in alternative media projects by publishing an Arabic-Hebrew magazine and creating their own digital stories (Windows 2015).

During an interview, Rutie Atsmon, executive director of Windows, mentioned that anti-normalization presents obstacles for the organization, which is based in Israel and includes both Israeli and Palestinian participants; however, she seeks to ensure that Windows does not become a “normalizing” organization (Atsmon, personal interview). Atsmon recently decided to end its association with ALLMEP, the American-based nonprofit—analyzed earlier—that provides resources for joint peace programs in Israel and Palestine (Atsmon, personal interview):

“ALLMEP doesn’t have a good reputation among Palestinians. It is harmful for Windows to be associated with ALLMEP. [...] This is because of anti-normalization. Almost all the members of ALLMEP are normalizing: They bring kids to play, to have fun, to do all kinds of things that has nothing to do with what we think is the right thing to do. If we are associated with these kinds of organizations, it doesn’t help. [...] We work in refugee camps, not with Fatah, but with others who would not be seen with an Israeli, so we have to be sure that they don’t see us as normalizing” (Atsmon, personal interview).

According to Atsmon, there are major problems with some joint programs. In these cases, programs do not actively build relationships between Israelis and Palestinians (thus leading to ethnocentric dialogue) or address major issues of the conflict. Atsmon referred to sports programs as an example: “Usually they bring kids from both sides to play football [...]. Usually it has nothing to do with dialogue—talking about and learning about the conflict. It is simply about playing” (Atsmon, personal interview). The anti-normalization movement, on the other hand, effectively identifies these problems and illuminates the inequality between Israelis and Palestinians that persists in some joint programs (Atsmon, personal interview).

Whereas some organizations voluntarily elect to uphold the demands of anti-normalization, some organizations are, more or less, compelled to accept the movement. In these cases, nonprofit leaders may have disagreed with certain aspects of the movement but felt that their programs would be put in jeopardy if they did not support the movement. For example, the Holy Land Trust is a nonprofit organization that does not actively support anti-normalization as a movement but accepts certain elements of the concept. Established in 1998, the organization offers trainings and seminars focused on four domains—nonviolence, transformation, healing, and immersion (Holy Land Trust 2015). Located in Bethlehem, the Holy Land Trust implements programs throughout the West Bank; however, the organization also includes Israeli participants in certain seminars. Within the past three years, however, the organization redefined its mission, shifting from political organizing to interpersonal reconciliation (Awad, personal interview). During an interview, Sami Awad, director of the Holy Land Trust, explained the new mission of the organization:

“We have changed our focus from pursuing peace through a political solution to considering how to

enable peace through engaging with individuals and communities. We focus on building relationships, not just supporting a political solution between two nations fighting over the same land. We're looking into other deeper issues that need to be addressed, like religion, gender, intercultural cooperation, [and] recognition of the rights of the other" (Awad, personal interview).

Within this new framework, the organization adopted the domains of nonviolence, transformation, healing, and immersion as the fundamental avenues to ensuring peace and reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis. Projects in the domain of nonviolence include trainings, seminars, curriculum development, activism, and strategic thinking. According to Awad, "the goal of this domain is to counter those who think that violence is the way to deal with or end conflict" (Awad, personal interview). These projects identify how Palestinian and Israeli leaders can use nonviolence as a tool to seek realization of equal rights as opposed to the current political situation of oppression.

Because the Holy Land Trust engages Israelis and internationals in programs that promote reconciliation, the organization risks being labeled as "normalizing." According to Awad, anti-normalization has become one of the largest obstacles that the Holy Land Trust faces (Awad, personal interview). Though he argues that the organization is not normalizing, Awad explains that anti-normalization activists misinterpret programs that engage Israelis (Awad, personal interview):

"With many Palestinians there is now the anti-normalization movement, which says Palestinians should not interact in any way with Israelis because things do not move forward when we do that. At one level, I say, 'Yes, we have not had things move forward when we have had Israelis and Palestinians together to discuss this as a *political* conflict.' But we are trying to say that we can discuss other elements of the conflict to see how we can move forward in these other ways" (italics added) (Awad, personal interview).

By "discuss other elements," Awad is referring to building peace, not through top-down negotiations, but grassroots activism, education, and the empowerment of Palestinians—three elements of co-resistance that align with anti-normalization. However, Awad also inaccurately states that anti-normalization prohibits interactions

with Israelis. This false claim reflects Awad's concern about anti-normalization after the Holy Land Trust experienced a decrease in participation because some Palestinians feared they would be labeled as normalizers if they participated. Though participation did not decrease significantly, the incident worried Awad, compelling him to implement Holy Land Trust projects in a manner that aligns with anti-normalization (Awad, personal interview). As a result, the Holy Land Trust is deliberate in selecting Israeli partners with whom to collaborate. According to Awad, "Even though we are working with Israeli organizations, we are only working with organizations that adhere [to] and honor the same values and principles that we support" (Awad, personal interview).

These four examples reflect the significant and nuanced influence of anti-normalization in reshaping how organizations pursue peace. The movement does not simply prevent normalizing activities from occurring, but actively redefines the paradigm of peace in order to establish justice as a prerequisite—or co-requisite—for peace.

Acknowledging Problems

Although anti-normalization has begun to reshape perspectives on peace, the movement also exhibits several problems. Because the movement lacks consistency and central organization, anti-normalization activists interpret the movement at their own discretion (Salem 2005). As a result, activists sometimes label organizations as normalizing without acknowledging or understanding the peace initiatives that they target (Awad, personal interview). Thus, a co-resistance program could be, inaccurately, defined as normalizing. On the other hand, the movement lacks a mechanism for monitoring organizations (Sullum, personal interview). In many cases, organizations that embrace normalization choose not to publicize their initiatives; instead, they fly under the

anti-normalization radar—thus rendering the movement ineffective in achieving its mission. Seldom, but most problematic, some anti-normalization activists act through intimidation tactics—or even violence (Dajani, personal interview). These examples of the movement in practice contradict the *ideology* of anti-normalization, which is nonviolent by definition.

Assigning Blame

Without central authority or consistency, anti-normalization activists apply their own interpretations of the movement, often liberally using the term to label peace organizations (Asideh, personal interview). This problem runs the risk of falsely identifying a program as normalizing, which could have major implications for the joint organization. It could cause a decrease in participation, social exclusion, and even potential threats of violence (Dajani, personal interview). In order to explain this problem, I will analyze the case of OneVoice Palestine.

OneVoice, founded in 2002, is an international grassroots organization focused on endorsing a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (OneVoice Palestine 2016). The organization has separate chapters in Israel and the Palestinian territories respectively, but the primary mission of both is to increase pressure on political leaders to sign a peace agreement that ensures justice and self-determination for Palestinians (Asideh, personal interview). The main project facilitated by OneVoice Palestine is a youth leadership program, educating hundreds of participants in the West Bank and Gaza (Asideh, personal interview):

“We empower them through long-term trainings on conflict resolution, public speaking, peace building, and negotiations. These programs also raise awareness about the history of the conflict and show how we, as youth, can tackle these obstacles. We also give trainings on campaigning—how to make pressure on the leaders and government to make peace building more effective. We work in parallel with the group in Israel. They ran a campaign to put pressure on the ministry of

finance to cut funding to settlements. In Palestine, we run campaigns to support Palestinian leadership in the negotiations because it is not popular among Palestinians” (Asideh, personal interview).

However, the program was labeled a normalizing institution, even though it aligns with a co-resistance framework, independently coordinated with an Israeli partner. As a result of this misstep, Mohammad Asideh, the outreach officer at OneVoice Palestine, who is Palestinian, does not support anti-normalization (Asideh, personal interview). In fact, he finds the movement to have significant problems with consistency. “Sometimes Palestinians don’t even want to listen to what we do,” he said. “They just criticize us blindly” (Asideh, personal interview). According to Asideh, this term carries serious consequences and fails to fully acknowledge the benefits of co-resistance:

“Anti-normalizers nowadays do not differentiate between the Israeli right and those on the left of the political map; nor do they differentiate between the Israeli government and Israeli civil society. Instead, out of a purist approach, they call for a stop to all dialogue with Israelis, including joint peace-building activities. Not only that, but they also threaten Palestinian individuals or organizations they refer to as ‘collaborators’ and sabotage joint peace-building activities” (Pundak 2012: 51).

Although Asideh does not agree with anti-normalization, he acknowledges the motivation behind labeling OneVoice Palestine as normalizing. He believes that the precedent set by the Israeli government has caused anti-normalization activists to respond with these sweeping generalizations of joint peace initiatives—a move that intimidates joint peace organizations (Asideh, personal interview). He argues that Israeli actions toward the Palestinians reinforce violent behavior, because the Israeli government only responds to episodes of aggression by Palestinians (Asideh, personal interview). As a supporter of BDS, a movement with similar intentions but clearer implementation, Asideh acknowledges the reason why Palestinians sometimes blindly accuse peace organizations of normalizing the conflict:

“For me as a Palestinian, I am very supportive of BDS and their actions. There’s a military occupation here on our land. They kill Palestinians every week. They arrest Palestinians every week. Even my brother was arrested. [...] We have thousands of reasons to boycott Israel. [...] For me, I would boycott even, like, their art. When you find Israeli soldiers coming to your home—like, last week, my brother was chatting with me on Facebook at 1:00 AM. As we were chatting, he said that Israeli soldiers just arrested my father. How could you, as an Israeli soldier, come to my house—and my little brother, my little sister are sleeping and you just woke them up, like, crazy—you explode the door, and you just take a man from his house, and just go?” (Asideh, personal interview).

Although Asideh seems to assign blame to the Israelis, he does not excuse the Palestinian anti-normalization activists who falsely accuse organizations of normalizing activities. This theme reveals a major problem with anti-normalization in practice.

Ineffective Monitoring

One the other hand, sometimes anti-normalization activists are not diligent enough. Instead of falsely accusing organizations, they neglect actual normalizing activities because joint peace initiatives operate under the radar, selecting not to publicize events that bring Israelis and Palestinians together.

Kids4Peace, an organization in Jerusalem, offers a relevant example of this behavior. Beginning in 2002, Kids4Peace expanded from solely operating in Jerusalem to assuming a global role, “dedicated to ending conflict and inspiring hope in Jerusalem and other divided societies around the world,” particularly through interfaith cooperation (Sullum, personal interview). Although Kids4Peace is a global organization, I will refer to the organization solely with respect to its Jerusalem chapter for the purpose of this research. The organization facilitates the Pathways to Peace Program, a four-year curriculum beginning in the sixth grade. This program focuses on building relationships between Israelis and Palestinians in Jerusalem through learning about their different cultures, religions, and identities (Kids4Peace 2016). In high school, the participants transition to the Peace Builders Forum, a new initiative focused on social action and

empowerment (Sullum, personal interview).

Although the anti-normalization movement indirectly affects Kids4Peace, the staff believe the movement has the potential to directly disrupt the organization's work in the future (Sullum, personal interview). Palestinian participants are often unwilling to tell their peers that they are involved in Kids4Peace. If they do, they "tend to get very challenging feedback" (Sullum, personal interview):

"We are working closely with media and we are working on PR to make sure that we are not always doing everything publicly. We are not overusing media, so we are not, every day, in the newspapers. Every few months there is an article about our organization, but it is not every day. [...] We are very careful with posting things, especially political things. We know that it could be problematic if you post something about politics" (Sullum, personal interview).

In this way, Kids4Peace has effectively continued its programs, which Palestinian activists would deem normalizing, without the activists realizing. This element of the movement represents a major problem for anti-normalization: the movement is ineffective in identifying and targeting normalizing institutions in order to eliminate the perpetuation of asymmetrical power relations.

Intimidation and Violence

Finally, though rare, the anti-normalization movement is sometimes prone to intimidation and violent tactics. In these cases, activists may aggressively interrupt normalizing events, assault or threaten to assault normalizers, or establish a setting of social exclusion to the extent that normalizers face ostracism, disenfranchisement, and marginalization.

To Mohammed Dajani, a Palestinian and former professor at Al Quds University, the anti-normalization movement leads, not to Palestinian liberation, but to a continuation of the "cycle of violence" that has prevented the two sides from establishing peace. Because Palestinians and Israelis cannot achieve conflict resolution without

communicating with one another, Dajani views anti-normalization as “anti-peace, anti-reconciliation” (Dajani, personal interview). Palestinian and Israeli commentators continue to disagree on the accepted definition of anti-normalization. According to Dajani, normalization simply means “getting things back to normal.” In other words, the act of normalizing is simply moving “from a state of conflict to state of reconciliation,” through which Palestinians and Israelis can enter a state of peace (Dajani, personal interview).

Due to the controversy over its definition, the anti-normalization movement has mobilized major campaigns against Palestinians—even if they argue that their initiatives are not “normalizing.” Dajani, for example, faced extreme criticism from the anti-normalization movement while he was a professor at Al Quds University in Jerusalem (Epstein 2014). As part of an educational initiative, Dajani organized a trip with his students—all Palestinian—to visit Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland in order to expose his students to the reality of the Holocaust (Dajani, personal interview). However, anti-normalization activists, without full knowledge of the parameters of the student trip, accused Dajani of being a normalizer, “that [he] took them [to Auschwitz] in order to seek normalization with Israel and with the Israeli people” (Dajani, personal interview). Dajani said that anti-normalization activists viewed this episode as an act of treason because he allegedly “bought into Zionist propaganda” (Dajani, personal interview). For Dajani, however, this was an educational program, an opportunity to promote reconciliation and understanding (Epstein 2014).

Because of this, Dajani faced immense pressure, particularly from fellow faculty members at the university (Epstein 2014). “The negative environment that was created

made it very difficult for me to go to work or to resume my academic and professional career,” Dajani said. Despite the fact that he had broken no rules, the university failed to show him support (Dajani, personal interview). In fact, one faculty member accused Dajani of requiring students to attend the trip to Auschwitz without telling the participants where they would be going (Dajani, personal interview). Administrators even pressured the students who attended the trip to sign statements claiming that Dajani had, in fact, deceived the students, but they all refused to do so (Dajani, personal interview). Most of the students who attended the trip responded to the backlash with steadfast support for Dajani (Epstein 2014). They made clear that the trip was educational and not political, that the trip “did not make them less nationalistic, but made them more humane” (Dajani, personal interview).

However, the pressure by anti-normalization activists continued. “They have threatened my life,” Dajani said. “They have claimed that I am the ‘King of Normalization’ or that I am a traitor” (Dajani, personal interview). This pressure reflects a major problem with the anti-normalization campaign. Although it claims to be a movement that does not promote violence but resistance, the activists have, in some cases, resorted to intimidation tactics and violence against alleged “normalizers.” Therefore, Dajani argues that anti-normalization often leads to radicalization (Dajani, personal interview):

“If you are pro-peace and pro-normalization and pro-reconciliation, they will label you as a traitor and, as such, they try to undermine you within the community. They try to intimidate you. That’s what happened to me—when they demonstrated against me or trashed my office or threatened me or torched my car. The idea was to keep me silent” (Dajani, personal interview).

As a result of the pressure from the anti-normalization crowd, Dajani submitted his resignation, which he expected the university to reject—since he had, in fact, done

nothing illegal (Epstein 2014). However, the university accepted the resignation, and Dajani thus left Al Quds University (Dajani, personal interview). To Dajani, the anti-normalization movement destroyed his professional career—and his life, in many ways. However, he does not regret his decision to teach his students about the other:

“I strongly believe what I did was the right thing. We need to seek truth. We need to actually walk in the path of moderation, reconciliation, and negotiation. But we do not do that. We do not talk to each other. We do not build bridges of understanding and trust between each other” (Dajani, personal interview).

This type of violent and intimidating incident is not unique to Dajani’s case. On May 18, 2015, anti-normalization activists attacked Israeli and Palestinian participants in the Jerusalem Hug event, which sought to build positive interpersonal relations through contact between the two sides (Snider 2015). This problem of violence is a serious issue due to the anti-normalization movement’s loose construction, lack of continuity, and lack of central leadership. By definition, anti-normalization is nonviolent; however, these activists are exploiting anti-normalization rhetoric to support intimidating and violent opposition to Palestinian oppression.

Conclusions

In conclusion, I argue that anti-normalization, as a concept and as a movement, is shifting the paradigm of peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine. By persuading or compelling joint peace initiatives to eliminate normalizing activities, the movement has empowered the development of programs that comply with co-resistance strategies. Thus, joint peace organizations are recognizing that peace cannot exist without justice. With that said, however, the anti-normalization movement must overcome several problems due to a lack of consistency, ineffective monitoring, absence of leadership, and, in some cases, the promotion of violence.

Chapter Five

Conclusions

Through my research, I analyzed definitions, interpretations, and experiences of anti-normalization in order to create a comprehensive definition of the movement, to understand the impetus behind the concept, to analyze the movement in practice, and to identify its implications. To present my findings, I will summarize the answers to my initial research questions:

What are definitions and interpretations of anti-normalization? Through my research, I discovered that anti-normalization is defined as both a concept and a movement. Most simply, anti-normalization identifies and resists institutions that perpetuate the “colonization of the mind,” or the subconscious acceptance of an unequal status quo—the current asymmetry of power between Israel and Palestine.

However, the concept of anti-normalization varies in different contexts. Specifically, anti-normalization classifies Palestinian oppression into three distinct categories. The first category comprises the military occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the extensive restrictions on Gaza. The second category refers to discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel through state institutions. Finally, the third category relates to the global community, particularly with respect to the

continuation of oppression by international support for normalizing institutions, as well as through the rejection of the Palestinian right of return. The standards and demands of the anti-normalization movement vary based on the category of oppression, recognizing that some Palestinians who rely on Israeli institutions cannot fully disengage from the system of oppression. With this general explanation of anti-normalization, it is important to recognize that the answers to the remaining research questions each contribute an important element to the comprehensive definition of anti-normalization.

What is the impetus behind the movement? The motivation underlying the anti-normalization movement can be explained through the concept of “normalization”—specifically, institutions that propagate the continuation of occupation and justify the oppression of Palestinians. Normalization does not only occur as an intention to oppress but often exists subconsciously. Furthermore, normalization occurs on two levels—interpersonal and institutional—and, as previously mentioned, varies in different political and social contexts. Through the following question, I will explain how joint peace initiatives have contributed to normalization and thus, in part, inspired the anti-normalization movement.

Do joint Israeli-Palestinian peace initiatives perpetuate the oppression of Palestinians, and, if so, how? Within the context of the movement, normalization occurs within institutions that do not acknowledge, condemn, or resist the systematic oppression of Palestinians. Therefore, joint peacebuilding initiatives perpetuate oppression if they fail to recognize the inherent power imbalance between Israelis and Palestinians and attempt to build peace within an oppressive system, a peace which cannot exist because it is unequal.

Based on the concept of anti-normalization, however, joint peace initiatives can pursue projects that are non-normalizing—projects which are not considered normalizing. These peace initiatives are called “co-resistance” projects, which clearly and directly acknowledge and confront the occupation and oppression of Palestinians.

How is the anti-normalization movement executed? Anti-normalization as a concept informs anti-normalization in practice. The movement is generally executed through protests, boycotts, or demonstrations led to disrupt programs that are considered normalizing. In addition, anti-normalization is pursued through discursive strategies, including university lectures, academic publications, and news articles. However, as a movement, anti-normalization lacks central authority, consistency, and effective monitoring strategies. It operates as an ideology subject to interpretation—exercised and experienced differently based on different perspectives of activists.

What are the implications of anti-normalization with respect to peacebuilding? As a movement, anti-normalization is redefining the paradigm of peace in Israel and Palestine. Through anti-normalization, joint peace initiatives have adopted new strategies, recognizing problems within their programs, which previously perpetuated normalization. With that said, however, the lack of central authority, disorganization, and inconsistency within the movement create problems in confronting normalizing peace initiatives. These problems include incorrectly labeling co-resistance organizations as normalizing, failing to adequately monitor organizations to determine which are normalizing oppression, and resorting to violence and aggression in some circumstances.

The Process

To reach these conclusions, I conducted interviews with peace activists, academics,

and members of institutions affiliated with anti-normalization. In addition, I gathered data on the anti-normalization movement through newspaper editorials, online publications, and public documents from anti-normalization and joint peace organizations. I studied existing literatures on a history of Palestinian oppression and its impact on collective identity, an examination of Palestinian armed and nonviolent resistance, and an overview of the institutions, strategies, and movements that form the foundation of anti-normalization.

Based on my findings, I argue that anti-normalization identifies and resists forms of oppression propagated by joint Israeli-Palestinian peace initiatives. Despite intentions to promote healing and coexistence, joint peace initiatives that do not acknowledge and confront injustices enacted against Palestinians justify the status quo—the existing asymmetry of power between Israelis and Palestinians.

Therefore, I argue that anti-normalization continues to reshape the meaning of peace. In several cases, the movement has compelled or persuaded joint peace initiatives to acknowledge their problematic programs, those responsible for the normalization of Palestinian oppression, and recognize the necessity of justice in establishing peace. However, without consistency, leadership, or organization, the anti-normalization movement continues to perpetuate problems of its own, failing to effectively initiate the goals of the movement and, in some cases, promoting intimidation and violence.

Questions for Further Research

Following the research process, I identified two questions that, I believe, pose interesting additions to the literature on anti-normalization. First, what is the future of anti-normalization? Is it sustainable? On one hand, a lack of leadership and organization

threatens the future of the movement; however, its current powerful and pervasive presence may be able to establish a foundation for a sustained movement. The continuation—and evolution—of the anti-normalization movement could have major implications for the paradigm of peace. Second, in addition to its influence on civil society, how does this movement impact Israeli, Palestinian, and international governmental institutions? Although anti-normalization is primarily a project of the social sphere, its impact on peacebuilding has major political implications. I suggest that researchers consider analyzing the power of this movement in the context of government.

Appendix

Interview Questions

During the interviews, I asked some of the following questions:

1. Please tell me about yourself and your perspectives on the anti-normalization movement.
2. How would you define anti-normalization?
3. Why are some organizations—which bring Palestinians and Israelis together for dialogue or reconciliation—considered normalizing? What problems do joint Israeli-Palestinian peace and reconciliation initiatives cause?
4. How is anti-normalization distinct or different from the BDS Movement?
5. Who leads anti-normalization demonstrations? Is anti-normalization a formal movement, or is it only an ideology that individual Palestinians and internationals follow? Who participates in anti-normalization demonstrations?
6. Have anti-normalization demonstrations been successful? How?
7. How do anti-normalization activists confront normalizing organizations? What specific initiatives do anti-normalization activists implement and/or how do anti-normalization activists prevent joint Israeli-Palestinian peace organizations from pursuing their projects?

8. How do anti-normalization activists confront normalizing organizations and individual normalizers in Palestine? How do the normalizing organizations respond?
9. What qualities make an organization or individual a normalizer? What are the consequences of being identified as a normalizer in Palestinian society?
10. Is it acceptable to work with Israeli anti-Zionists and Israeli peace groups against normalization with Israel on an official level?
11. How can a joint Israeli-Palestinian peace organization ensure that it is not normalizing? What is an example of a non-normalizing Israeli-Palestinian joint peace organization?
12. What is the history of the anti-normalization movement?
13. Some Palestinians argue that peace must come from building relationships with the Other—with the Israelis. In this way, Palestinians will be able to achieve self-determination through reconciling their differences with Israelis and achieving a mutual resolution to the conflict. How do you respond to this perspective?
14. What are some examples of Palestinian or joint Israeli-Palestinian organizations that are normalizing?
15. What does the general Palestinian population think about the anti-normalization movement? Are most Palestinians in favor of the movement or opposed to it? Are any Israelis involved in the anti-normalization movement?
16. Is the task of anti-normalization to show the failures of a peace settlement and to prevent its implementation?
17. Is it possible to work against all aspects of normalization? Can the struggle

against political and economic normalization succeed? What about the struggle against cultural normalization?

18. Are negotiations and peace settlements always normalizing? Or is there a way to have negotiations and peace settlements while still supporting anti-normalization?
19. Do you have any recommendations of other people (or organizations) I should contact to interview for my research?
20. Do you think that Palestinians should engage in dialogue with Israelis in order to achieve a just peace? If so, why?

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